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Destroying Angels
and
Other Tales.
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LONDON:

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W. H. LUKE, BEDFORD STREET.

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“DESTROYING ANGELS.”

THE Carnival was at its height in Rome. * * * The ancient mistress of the world was holding high festival within her gates. The Imperial city was flooded with strangers from every quarter of the globe; English and Americans swarmed in the streets, in the balconies, in the carriages. Broad-shouldered, yellow-bearded Britons streamed along the Corso, the Condotti, the Babuino, only outnumbered by their heavily-moustachioed cousins from the other side of the Atlantic.

On a balcony on the first-floor of a house in the Corso, where the furious tide of humanity was surging in from the Via Condotti, stood a party of English and Italians,

all well provided with the munitions of war. A large trough, filled with confetti ran round the whole balcony, and this was perpetually replenished from inexhaustible stores within the house. Baskets full of bouquets lay just within the window, to be thrown to those favoured few in the seething crowd whom the ladies in that balcony might delight to honour. That these ladies were well-known in Rome was evident from the magnificent bouquets that were constantly aimed at them from the street: and from the desperate battles that were perpetually taking place between them and bands of the "haute noblesse" of Rome.

A dream of fair women truly was the scene in that balcony in the Corso: Every variety of beauty, blonde and brunette, lithe and undulating, or plump and rounded, was represented in that bevy of lovely girlhood, that pelted the youth of every nation congregated in the street below.

At the corner, where she could command both the Corso and the Condotti, stood

Olympia, Marchesa Roselli, the wife of the old and wealthy chief of an ancient Italian family. Her mother had been dead many years, and her father was supposed to have been drowned in the South Seas. The ship in which he had set sail from the Brazils, had never been heard of since her departure from Buenos Ayres, and several years had now elapsed since Olympia and a younger sister, Fiorella, had been left to the care of their father's mother, who was by birth an English-woman. This lady's rare beauty had attracted the notice of the Conte Spironi, a Neapolitan of high position, great personal attractions, and an utter absence of every kind of principle. This Conte Spironi, the Marchesa's grandfather, had been at no time a wealthy man. The troubles of 1848 in Italy entirely ruined him. His constitution, weakened by a life of profligacy, gave way under the strain of shame and poverty. He sank into an early grave, leaving his English widow and her son barely enough for their subsistence. The son, however, was nearly

fifteen years of age at the time of his father's death. His mother's English influence procured him a post in an English mercantile firm in Rome. He had married early, and lost his wife. He had been left a widower with two little girls—the Olympia and Fiorella of our tale—and having been sent by the firm to the Brazils on business connected with their trade, with a promise of partnership on his return, had, as was generally supposed, perished on his way home, leaving but a pittance behind him for his orphan children.

These girls had been brought up by their old English grandmother in all the miseries of sordid poverty. Money to such easily becomes the god of the imagination, and when the rich old Marchese offered Olympia his hand, his purse, and what remained of his withered old heart, she thought as little of refusing to be rich, even at such a price, as she did of throwing her loveliness into the tawny waves of the Tiber. If she loved not the Marchese, she loved none other, and thus her brightness knew as yet no shadow.

There in the balcony she stood, in all the dazzling brightness of her patrician beauty, the hot southern blood mantling in her cheeks, her great dark eyes sparkling with excitement and delight. Masses of rippling wavy hair shaded her broad, low brow ; long lashes fringed her eyes ; about her was a force, a power, a vitality that was infectious, magnetic and irresistible. It fired her eyes, it lurked in her hair, it rushed in furious currents through her nerves. She was never still. She was all motion, action, an endless wave of fire.

A wonderful contrast she formed to the English-women, on either side of her, her guests for the day. On her left, gazing sleepily into the Via Condotti, sat Mildred, Lady Morton ; a large, smooth, fair woman, a very type of Anglo-Saxon matronly beauty, a living embodiment of stately repose. On the other side of the Marchese stood Louise Eden, Lady Morton's younger sister, whose surpassing loveliness had been the one theme of all the youth of Rome since her arrival

some few weeks before. Her exquisite complexion, her deep blue eyes, her wealth of auburn hair, were only part of the marvellous harmony of the whole woman. Refinement, gentleness, repose, enveloped her in marvellous grace. Her figure, her voice, her manner, were all tuned to a delicious key of soothing peace. Nothing about her predominated. She moved noiselessly. Her voice was low and sweet: one knew not what she wore, so perfectly harmonious was the colouring of the "tout ensemble." If one felt hot, she looked cool; if one shivered, she looked healthful and warm. The wealth and fashion of Europe who had come to Rome for carnival were at the feet of the beautiful Louise. She was but a clergyman's daughter, without a sixpence; her beauty was her dowry; her sweet innocent serenity of heart her portion. Near Louise stood her especial friend, Fiorella Spironi, the Marchesa's only sister, a pretty little brown woman, always dressed to perfection; and the

very essence of good nature and unselfishness. Round these four women hovered some half-dozen English and Italians of the opposite sex. The old Marchese, dignified, decorous, courteous to punctiliousness, moved hither and thither through the crowded apartments, doing the honours of his house. The Marchese had been handsome in his youth, and in extreme age his features had preserved their regularity; but the eyes were faded, the skin wrinkled, the expression harsh and stern.

Volleys of confetti rained from the balcony; a free fight was kept up with the occupants of the opposite windows in the Corso, as well as with the maskers in the street. Huge bon-bons, with paper streamers of red, and green, and blue, were thrown to many a laughing upturned face that took the fancy of one or another of the Marchesa's guests. Presently the Marchesa leaning over to see who were immediately beneath, beheld two manly figures dressed alike in grey homespun suits, preparing to

hurl confetti in masses into the balcony above. They were not however quite ready for the attack. As quick as thought a sack of flour was emptied on their devoted heads by the Marchesa. As they emerged from their hiding place into the Corso, half blinded, half choked, and wholly discomfited, a cry rose from ladies and men alike as the two young Englishmen—for such they were—turned to give back their too-warm reception. Eccoli ! There they are ! was heard all round the balcony from the lips of English and Italians alike. Evidently some long expected friends had arrived. Cries of “*Ancora confetti !*” ran all along the balcony ! The two young men were backed up by some half-dozen of their countrymen, and in the end compelled those in the balcony to take refuge inside the apartments. No sooner had the fair bevy given in, than the party in the street bounded up the stone stairs, and appeared *en masse* in the drawing-rooms of Olympia Roselli.

Great favourites evidently were the two

young men in the homespun suits, tall, broad-shouldered, muscular fellows, whose sparkling eyes, curly hair and white even teeth, showed signs of an intense vitality and perfect health that fall to the lot of few. Singularly handsome men, both of them, and singularly alike. The same wavy brown hair, long lashes and heavy moustaches of a red, auburn colour, characterized them both. In the eyes alone was there a strongly-marked difference between the two men. The elder brother (for brothers they were) was gifted with eyes of a bright steel blue, while those of the younger were of a soft hazle, in some lights deepening into brown. About the younger there was a deeper tinge in every way. The complexion was less fair, the hair and moustache a shade darker; the expression more thoughtful, more gentle, yet more powerful than his brother's.

The elder, he with the keen, blue eyes, Sir Malcolm Morton, was the husband of the soft, smooth, prosperous-looking woman whom we have seen in the balcony with the

Marchesa. The younger is his brother Rupert. There is but a year between them. There does not seem indeed to be a day's difference in their age. The world, who know them not, believe them to be twins. Perhaps the strongest feeling in the minds of both is attachment to one another. Sir Malcolm had succeeded, when very young, to all the family estates, which were strictly entailed on heirs male, and had married, when he came of age, his rector's eldest daughter. He had been smitten by her beauty, struck with the ineffable repose that enveloped her. Her's was a stately presence at the head of his table. She was a loving mother to their two little girls, who were now about eight and seven years' old. She was an excellent nurse, an economical manager, a careful housekeeper, a perfect hostess. Her manner was unexceptionable, her taste in dress undeniable, and yet with all these qualities she was so absolutely unsuited to her husband as to make the lives of both incomplete, vague, negative, unhappy. She could not

honour him ; she knew him too well. She was too cold in temperament, to feel more for Malcolm than the "regulation" love demanded by social law. She had no faith in his judgment, and had learnt by experience that, if his statements had even a foundation in fact, it was the exception, not the rule. On the other hand Sir Malcolm believed that his wife had married him for position, and to get away from an unsympathetic home. She neglected him for their children ; she consulted the convenience of her servants, her babies, her pets even, before she consulted his. She took no interest in his pursuits. She openly disapproved of his companions, and established an espionage over his actions that no high-spirited man was likely to stand. The more she devoted herself to her two girls, the more he lived at his club. So that now, after having been married some nine years, each felt sadly tied, for all that remained of life, to an uncongenial mate. Such was the condition of affairs, that foreign trayel at

DESTROYING ANGELS,
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BY
THEO. MONRO.



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last seemed the only hope of mitigating the domestic wretchedness of both. After a short stay in Paris, they determined on wintering in Rome, and had been some three weeks quartered at the Hotel d' Angleterre, when the events occurred that have now to be related.

Lady Morton had married while her sister Louise was still a child. There was a difference of nearly ten years in their age, and though in outward seeming both possessed much the same style of Anglo-Saxon beauty, the training and character of the sisters was widely different. Mr. Eden had died shortly after his daughter Mildred's marriage, and the education of his younger child had been entrusted to the genial kindness of her dead mother's family, where the influences were all of a nature to foster what is most womanly and loveable in the sex, and to eradicate what is cold and selfish. Happy childhood had passed into tranquil womanhood, when, by the Morton's invitation, Louise Eden accompanied them to Rome. Great was the sensation caused in

Rome by the advent of this peerless young beauty. Sir Malcolm's position and means, his own and his brother's immense popularity with all classes and both sexes—his wife's magnificent presence and courteous demeanour to all comers, had already gained for the party at the Hotel d' Angleterre a notoriety which was fast becoming a social enthusiasm.

But when Rome knew that the Marchese Roselli and his bewitching young wife, together with the Signorina Fiorella Spironi, the Marchesa's sister, had joined forces with the now famous party of English, there was scarcely a person in the Imperial City who did not express his or her opinion of them one and all. They were the fashion, the rage; no ballroom was complete without them, their dress, looks, manner, actions, even their remarks were repeated and criticised, infinitely more than those of royalty itself. All who know Rome will easily understand from this, that society knew far more of the Mortons and Miss Eden, of

the Roselli and Fiorella Spironi, than any of those much-discussed personages did of themselves.

It is the opinion of a vast number of travelled people, that one of the most beautiful dreams of fair women that can be dreamed, is in the salons of the English Embassy at Rome, in the height of the winter season; so varied is the type of loneliness gathered to the Imperial City for the festa days of carnival; but even here the lovely English girl outshone the beauty of Spain, Russia, America, even Italy herself; at the weekly assembly at the Hotel Costanzi, at the balls of the Circolo Nazionale, at the various Embassies and even at the Quirinal itself, Louise Eden bore away the palm from all, and yet remained to all appearance utterly unmindful of the enthusiasm her beauty excited in the hearts of the sons of the South.

It was the Tuesday week before Lent began. The German Club was to give a Fancy Ball the same evening, and all the

Marchesa's guests were comparing notes regarding the costumes to be worn. The Mortons and Miss Eden were to go in Venetian costumes of the 16th century, the Marchesa and her sister as Spanish peasants, and the Marchese as a Spanish nobleman. A private ball in the Marchesa's apartment only the night before, had broken the ice for all her friends, Italian and English. Every one in her salons knew everyone else, all were sociable, and bright, and gay; crowds came in and out,—the English group still the centre of attraction,—till it was time for table-d' hôte at the Hotel d' Angleterre; and they separated to meet again at the Sala Dante later in the evening. At the ball, Malcolm and Rupert Morton were dressed precisely alike, in tight-fitting doublets of gold brocade, crimson velvet cloaks, fastened at the shoulders and lined with white satin, long hose of pale flesh-coloured silk, and boots of buff leather to the middle of the calf. Venetian caps of crimson and white, with long ostrich feathers

of the same hues, completed a costume which was acknowledged by all to be the richest and most artistic of the many there that night.

Lady Morton and her sister were also dressed alike in cloth of silver, with long trains of the same material, edged with ermine, and trimmed with turquoise-blue velvet and Roman pearls. The Marchesa Olympia and Fiorella wore short dresses of crimson satin, covered with costly black lace. Diamonds sparkled in their hair, on their arms, at their throats; never yet were peasants seen in such sheen of gems since the days of Cophetua and the Beggar Maid.

Lady Morton considered it beneath the dignity of British matronhood to waltz, and the Marchese had said good-bye to such pastimes some twenty years ago. Sir Malcolm and his brother were considered second to none as partners,—a dictum in which the Marchesa and her companions seemed fully to acquiesce.

In one of the ante-rooms the strains of a

zither played with no little taste and skill, arrested the attention of Sir Malcolm and the Marchesa, Rupert and Fiorella, who paused to listen to its fitful strains, while to judge by the looks of Lady Morton and her sister, who were attended by the Marchese, the domestic pool would probably be stirred to storm before many hours were over.

Lady Morton was too phlegmatic to be really jealous, but she liked her handsome husband to pay her attention in public, even though it bored her in private. Moreover she could not but be aware how readily her stalwart spouse succumbed to beauty, wit and flattery, and young as was Olympia, none knew better the weak points in men's armour than she, or when to land the captive of her line. As to the two Mortons, all other feminine atoms being out of the way, they would have made love to their great grand-mothers or a Lapland fish-wife. Already in their short acquaintance Fiorella's heart beat fast, and a film came over her vision when she met the glowing glances of the

handsome Rupert ; while the Marchesa was loosing all her childish joyousness, and a great passion engendered of Malcolm's bold blue eyes was eating into her heart's core. He was married. Yes ! and so was she ! What recked she of that doting old man, whose diamonds glittered in her raven hair, or of that white, sleek, pompous woman who was the mother of Malcolm's girls ! She had not given way at first, but the fight had grown fainter daily, and the steel blue eyes had sent their shafts home at last to the eternal misery of both.

Meanwhile Lady Morton was more engrossed in watching her sister than her husband. He was but amusing himself according to his wont, but Louise was as a thirsty lily ; her head drooped, her whole air showed depression, dejection, and pain. Was it Roman fever impending, thought my lady ? Or was it love ? And if the latter, for whom ? Half the young nobles in Rome were "épris," but few had money enough to support their rank as bachelors, much less could afford to wed a penniless

beauty. Rupert seemed devoted to the Spironi girl, who was rich by the Marchese's generosity; while he had but his Cavalry half-pay and an allowance from his elder brother. There was the wealthy German Count Wulffberg certainly, and the young Dutch banker from Amsterdam, but the former was nearly blind and pitted with small pox, and the latter was already unwieldy, from the effects of unlimited beer. Well! she must watch Louise. If it should be Roman fever after all? And the mother's heart went back to her two girls. Was it really true that the fever was not infectious? But Louise looked white and wan. They would go home; and Lady Morton swept majestically across the room to where the electric clouds were flashing lightning from their depths, and speeding the shafts of love and death.

Strong as was the friendship subsisting between the Signorina Spironi and Miss Eden, each felt that there was one subject on which they could never converse, and as

to each that subject was fast becoming the only one that filled the hearts of both, an unwilling coldness and restraint was gradually growing up between them.

That the object of their passion was gay, handsome Rupert Morton made their pain as hard to bear as was possible, even to women who had reached that period of love when pain occupies so much larger a place in the heart than pleasure, for to each in turn he seemed to open all his flow of sympathy, just stopping short of any avowal that could be construed by either into one of love. Ten years in a crack Cavalry regiment, years in which the expressions of affection or admiration had been reduced to an exact science, so as always to mean something more than friendship, and something less than marriage; ten years so spent had trained him far too well in all the manœuvres of flirtation, for two such young doves as Fiorella and Louise to escape his fascinations.

The two girls had been school-fellows in

England and fast friends, but the tie that held them together now was more one of mutual love and fear of the same object, than the old affection for each other of past years. When Fiorella looked at her rival, her heart died within her at sight of Louise's marvellous beauty ; on the other hand, the English girl was well aware how impossible it was for Rupert to wed a penniless orphan, and how strong against her were the fascinations of Fiorella's wit and the fortune with which she had been dowered by her generous brother-in-law, the Marchese Roselli. Thus among all seven of our friends, but so lately in sweet accord, were aroused the demons of distrust and jealousy not lightly to be laid in characters such as those of our heroines, or likely to die out in a city like Rome, where the surroundings, traditions, nay ! the very air itself, set a light to every love that lives ; a love that scorches, where, in other climes, it only warms, the heart.



LADY Morton had brought with her to Rome all her English principles, prejudices and proclivities. Not even the excitement of a Roman Carnival roused her phlegmatic nature to any unusual enthusiasm; her one end and aim was to impress on all foreigners her unimpeachable Anglo-Saxonism, which embraced no little prudery and precision in its social code. Her ideas, her opinions, her conclusions were in reality, founded on a very nether millstone of British obstinacy and insularity, from which she allowed no consideration, personal, social, or intellectual, to allow her for one instant to depart.

It was but natural that a gay, undisciplined, pleasure-seeking nature like Malcolm's fretted at his wife's rigidity of thought and action. The atmosphere of Rome, moral and social, is certainly not one that places obstacles in the way of laxity of life. On the contrary, every possible influence is perpetually at hand to steep the imagination in sensuous pleasures, and inflame the dormant passions, even of the coldest.

To Olympia, Malcolm appeared a very god of beauty and strength and love. For him her whole soul had budded into bloom ; had ripened into maturity of passionate womanhood. What to her,—she fiercely demanded of herself in the solitude of her splendid misery,—what to her was her childish vow, made in ignorance of life's meaning, in presence of a priest ? She could not, dared not, think of that smooth-faced woman at the Hotel d' Angleterre, the woman who owned and despised all that she coveted and worshipped upon earth ; nor of the fair young girls whose baby lips had called her idol, father.

To Olympia, restraint by others was as unknown as self-control. The intoxicating influences of unlimited wealth and power ; the admiration she had excited throughout Imperial Rome on emerging from her childhood's obscurity to the position of Marchesa Roselli, had swept away what slight barriers had existed to her resistless self-will.

The next night, Wednesday, had been

chosen for the “Asili” ball, held in the Capitol, and though the crowd was too great to admit of much dancing, the opportunities for establishing understandings were neither few nor far between. Night after night the whole mass of Rome’s pleasures-seeking guests met in her glittering salons, at the Costanzi assemblies, at the Veglioni in the Apollo Theatre, our party of seven appeared and disappeared in concert; the suspicions of all keeping pace with the feverish excitement increasing day by day.

An incident that occurred at the Masquerade in the Apollo Theatre had, however, greatly disturbed the whole party. For once the Marchesa had accompanied her husband from their box into the heaving, surging throng below. Malcolm was escorting his sister-in-law, having left his wife and Fiorella in charge of his brother. Lady Morton, relieved from the annoyance of seeing her husband engrossed by another woman under her very nose, was rather less like an iceberg than usual, and seeing that

Rupert and Fiorella would not object to her absence, she thawed sufficiently towards an Attaché of the French Legation, to accompany him into the crowd of maskers in the body of the theatre. Comparatively few of the men were in disguise, but as the splendid English-woman swept along in her pale, pink domino, on the Attaché's arm, she became aware that she was closely followed by a tall, broad-shouldered man, masked, in full evening dress, whose huge, iron-grey moustache effectually hid the expression of his mouth, while his great dark eyes seemed to glitter fiercely through his silken mask.

Presently, while her attendant Cavalier had gone to procure her refreshments, the masked stranger came softly behind her, and said, in very good English, "Lady Morton, be warned in time, there is danger to you and yours in Rome; in another week it will be too late." Before she had time to recover from her intense surprise, the man had disappeared. Though a woman of strong nerves, the tone was so deep and

solemn, that Mildred felt very uneasy, and returned to her box with beating heart. She found it empty: Rupert and Fiorella had gone. For some minutes Mildred sat alone, her pink domino gathered closely round her figure, as she scanned the crowd below for any traces of the mysterious stranger. Shortly the Marchesa entered alone, trembling from head to foot, pale as her domino of white satin. She spoke no word, but stood up in the box eagerly watching the groups below. Mildred longed to ask her if she too had been warned of impending ill, but in that case she must betray her own terror, and this she would not do; a commotion near the entrance of the theatre attracted the notice of both women, and in an instant they were hurrying along the corridor and down the stairs to where the Marchese, Malcolm, Rupert, and Fiorella were standing round the insensible form of Louise, bathing her temples, chafing her hands, all evidently in much surprise, perturbation and alarm. The Marchesa's eyes

sought those of her sister questioningly, and saw in them the same look of hunted terror that she and Mildred had seen in each other's in the box upstairs. "She has had a shock," said one. "I heard a fellow speak to her and I saw him hurriedly leave the theatre," said another. "I only left her one moment," said Malcolm, deprecatingly, and she dropped at my feet like a stone when I returned. Restoratives soon had the desired effect. The beautiful blue eyes opened in dreamy surprise, then the look of alarm came again into her face, and clutching Mildred's arm she muttered, "Quick, quick, take me home; take me home."

To Lady Morton and the Marchesa it was clear as day that the same awe-inspiring agency had been at work with their sisters as with themselves, but the present was no moment for explanations. Heart-sick and alarmed they returned to their respective homes. Malcolm and Rupert walked together to the Hotel d' Angleterre, expressing regrets, common-place enough, that Louise

should have been so over-tired as to have caused a scene.

Mildred and Louise held each other's hand in silence till they reached home, then the elder sister told her own experience of the Veglioni and asked peremptorily for an explanation of Louise's fright.

"I had noticed," said Louise, still white and trembling, "a tall, dark man, with a black mask following me wherever I went. I felt afraid of him, I dont know why. Malcolm only laughed at me; said all Italians stared at pretty women—that I should get accustomed to it in time, and so on. Just then Fiorella came past on Rupert's arm, and the strange man made a movement as if he were going to catch her in his arms. I heard him mutter, 'Fiorella, carissima mia,' and then he turned suddenly away, and strode into the hall; Malcolm left me a moment alone to speak to some English friends whom I did not know, and I leaned against the wall for support. Then a voice suddenly hissed in my ear "Woman you love that

handsome Englishman, give him up, or this dagger——’; as he spoke I saw a dagger gleam in his hand, I screamed and fell forward.—I know nothing more, I suppose I fainted then.”—Louise seemed as though the very recollection of the mysterious threat would render her again insensible. She was utterly unnerved and clung to Mildred in an agony of terror.

In the meantime, the Marchesa Roselli and her sister were closeted in Olympia’s own apartment in the Corso, but the Marchesa was much the more perturbed of the two. Fiorella sat on the floor gazing into the embers on the hearth, but Olympia paced the room like a caged lioness. “There is some fearful catastrophe impending,” she burst out presently; “I feel it in every nerve and tissue of my body. What can that man know of me, that he should warn me as he did.”

“ Yet you say, he only implied danger,” replied Fiorella, “ and that not from himself, but from some unseen influence.”

He said, "the doom of your father's race is on you, I see it in the stars." How does he know anything about our father's race, and what does he mean by its doom?"

"He could not have found out about our hereditary curse, Olympia," cried the girl, springing to her feet, "he could not mean insanity?"

"No one knows of that," returned Olympia, "but you and I, since our grand-mother went to her long home. The Marchese believes, like all the rest of Rome, that our father perished on his way home from Buenos Ayres."

Fiorella again sought counsel in the glow of the dying embers. "Olympia," she said thoughtfully, "have we done right in keeping this awful secret from the Marchese? It is a terrible burden on my conscience."

"Right! Burden!! Conscience!!! " exclaimed Olympia, her breath coming thick and fast, her dark eyes flashing with light that was but too significant of abnormal excitement, "what had we two pauper girls, without a friend in the world, or a franc in

our pockets, to do with right or conscience ? Had the Marchese ever dreamed of the curse upon our race, think you we should ever have left our rags and penury and be standing here with the Roselli diamonds in our hair ? And yet," she sighed, suddenly sinking down on her knees at Fiorella's feet, all the furious excitement fading from her face, "and yet, there is something else in the world better than diamonds, Fiorella ; and I think you have already found it out, my sister, have you not ? Tell me, Carissima, is not Rupert Morton always in your thoughts ? Never since childhood have we withheld a confidence from each other ; tell me, Fiorella, is this so ?"

"It is so, Olympia," replied her sister very low and quietly, "and it is so to my eternal misery. I love him, oh yes ! I love him better than my life, better than happiness here or in another world. I love him so that I will not marry him, first because I will not transmit to sons of his the fatal curse of madness in our race, and next

because I am certain in my heart of hearts he does not love me as I love him. He likes to talk to me, to be amused and eased from the boredom of insipid womanhood, but he *loves* Louise Eden in his inmost soul. He feels he cannot marry her, for she has nothing, and he only what Sir Malcolm thinks fit to give, and Louise is not the woman to care to live on a brother's generosity. So he has put his love away, his real great love, and offers me his hand, his name, but not his heart——”

“ Has offered, Fiorella, offered you marriage, and you have not told me?” interrupted Olympia, sadly.

“ Carissima, it was but to-night he spoke to me of marriage,” rejoined her sister. “ I know his face, his glorious eyes, his smile, too well not to note each trifling difference in their looks. His love for me is forced, it is smiling, gladsome, brave, self-confident; but when Louise comes across his path, when she hangs upon his arm, or looks up into his tender face, the smile dies from his

lips, the gladness, and bravery, and self-confidence from his eyes, with one silent gleam of utter devotion, of resignation, and of loving pain ; the love that knows not pangs of pain and jealousy is no love. Olympia, I am strong to suffer, if I am alone, but wedded to the man I worship, I am not strong enough to love without return —and live.”

Olympia’s arms were round her sister’s waist, her head was buried in her sister’s lap; Fiorella gazed abstractedly into the fire, till she heard Olympia’s convulsive sobs and felt the hot tears trickle on her hand. Olympia’s nerve had broken down ; confidence had won confidence ; wildly, incoherently, madly, she poured out her passionate love, her shameful scorching secret, into the ears of her astounded sister. Fiorella had inherited much more of the Anglo-Saxon temperament than Olympia ; she was shocked at the frantic desperation of her sister’s words. She had been so engrossed with her own love and sadness

of heart that she had not dreamed even of Olympia's passion for Malcolm, of a married woman for a married man. Fiorella shuddered as she listened to the wild outpourings of her sister's heart. Surely a curse had fallen upon both, though not the curse they looked for.

"Olympia, this is indeed madness," she said, as she folded the passion-tossed Marchesa in her loving embrace. "Consider, Carissima, the livid remorse such a love as yours must bring, what burning shame to him to whose generosity we owe all that we have, to the mother of those two delicate girls, to you yourself, and all our race, now and evermore. Let us leave Rome, Olympia, at once, tomorrow; let us plead ill-health, necessity for change of air, anything, to escape where we may forget the fatal beauty, and the love of those Destroying Angels that have crossed our path, and stormed our hearts, and marred our peace, to give us nothing in return."

"Destroying Angels," shrieked Olympia, springing to her feet. Saviour or Destroyer,

Angel or Devil, I care not which, I love him, *love him, LOVE HIM*; he is my Angel, my world, my destiny, my god. Oh ! why, why, why, did they give me to that stern old man? Fate has robbed me of all else; fate shall not rob me of my love."

She tore the jewels from her hair and throat, and dashed her coronet to the ground. Her great eyes blazed with an unnatural lustre; her fingers tore convulsively at her wealth of raven hair.

Olympia, the peerless woman, seemed transformed into a fiend.

In vain Fiorella strove to soothe her, to rouse her native pride, her sense of self-respect, she only moaned as she lay prone upon the ground, "I cannot live without my love."

Malcolm and Rupert were equally ill at ease. For the first time, there seemed to be some strange constraint on each. "I dont feel much like sleep," said Rupert, as they ascended the stairs of the Hotel d'Angleterre, "come and have another cigar, Malcolm,

before you go to your room, I want to talk to you." Malcolm was nothing loath, and the two sought Rupert's apartment. Strangely alike these two, the same curly auburn hair, the same features, colouring and form, the same look of intense muscular power, the same full, firm lips, and square clean-shaven jaw, only the eyes were utterly unlike, Malcolm's so blue, and keen, and cold ; Rupert's so brown, and soft, and amorous. "Malcolm," burst out Rupert suddenly, after smoking some while in meditative silence, "I asked Fiorella Spironi to-night to marry me."

"The devil you did," returned Malcolm. "Well, one never knows which way the wind blows with another man's love affairs, I thought all along you were head over ears in love with Louise."

"So I am," said Rupert laconically. Malcolm whistled long and low, but was silent.

"Old fellow," resumed the younger brother presently, "I have never had any secrets

from you, and I dont want to begin now ; but though I don't care a rush for the opinion of the world at large, I do care for yours, and I feel too great a blackguard in the way I have acted towards those two girls, to be able to speak of it without shame and self-reproach, but I must have it all out ; the time is past for shilly-shallying."

"I think you may trust me, Rupert," interposed the other, "whatever our faults, we have never been false to each other."

"I knew from the Marchesa Roselli," continued Rupert, "that her sister would be richly dowered by the Marchese. I saw from every look and action of the witty, sprightly Italian girl, that she had fallen in love with me even before I paid her such attention as I have of late ; and the more I have tried to train my feelings in her direction, the more hopelessly entangled have I been in the meshes of my passion for Louise. I know now that never in my life before, have I loved at all. Fancy, imagination, passions, have been stirred heretofore, but

such a love, such a worship as is mine for Louise Eden never came into my heart. To marry her penniless, penniless myself, was a madness patent even to me, in my love-blinded state: it would be misery eventually to us both; so I made up my mind to cut the gordian knot by proposing to Fiorella."

"And making yourself abjectly wretched for life." put in Malcolm.

"'L'homme propose mais la femme dispose' in this case" replied Rupert, "Fiorella is as noble-hearted as she is fascinating. She did not even reproach me with my double-dealing, but she read me clearly and rightly, through and through; told me with what measure I loved her, and how I loved Louise; and refused, once for all, to be my wife. She tried to let me down easy, poor little girl; but call it wounded vanity, or what you will, I never felt so infernally small or so utterly contemptible in my own eyes as I do this night."

For answer, Malcolm only burst into a hoarse laugh, and paced the room with

swinging strides, a bad light in his fierce, steel-blue eyes.

Suddenly he stopped short, and laid his hands on his brother's shoulders.

"Contemptible ! did you say, Rupert, contemptible ! if *you* feel that for such small sin as yours, what must I feel for my own folly, my own weakness, my own undoing. I, too, feel I can no longer keep to myself all the wild passions and regrets and fears that are sending my very soul to Hell. Have you not seen the undoing of us all in—."

"What on earth do you mean, Malcolm," interrupted Rupert, springing from his chair and confronting his brother with amazed eyes: "good Heavens, calm yourself, old fellow, "what on earth have you to accuse yourself of?"

"To accuse myself of," muttered the other, in dull metallic tones, "nothing yet, nothing yet," but I am hurried on by a fate, a fury stronger than my will, a force, mesmeric, crushing, fatal to me and mine. If I

am not yet false in deed, I am false in heart to the wife I swore to cherish, to the mother of my girls. Knowing myself false, mean, worthless, still I do not feel the shame the less or underrate the ruin of the future."

"Stay, Malcolm," said his brother very pale; "Before you go on, let me know plainly the worst. The object of your love is——?"

"Olympia! Till I saw her, I knew not what love meant; none know better than you what manner of life mine has been with Mildred, a life of conventionality and pettiness, unreasoning jealousy on her side—absence of love on mine—daily bickerings and endless disagreements; the union of a volcano with the passionless sea. Not till I met Olympia did I know what latent depths there were unstirred in me. To go on is ruin, disgrace, crime; to go back is impossible—to have learnt what love means and then to go back to the scarcely permitted caresses of a marble statue! I cannot, Rupert, I cannot. My very will is paralysed

by the power Olympia has over me, body and soul——”

“For heaven’s sake, pause, Malcolm, before you cross the Rubicon which separates life and death. Nay, I am wrong, for on the other side of a river such as this there is no hope. Now you have name and fame, children who love and honour you; then what will be yours? Never can you hold up your head again, your girls will live to hold you in aversion and contempt, for the shame you have brought upon their innocent heads. You will bring ruin, disgrace, and anguish on your own family, your wife’s and the Spironi, to say nothing of that stern, old man, who dotes on his one ewe lamb. Malcolm, my own dear brother; this is all a hideous dream, a nightmare that will pass away. Your bright promise, your excellence in art, your strength, your beauty, your talents, cannot, shall not, be extinguished in the whirlpool of an insane passion.” But Malcolm scarcely heard or understood. The paroxysm of excitement

had passed for the moment, and the gay, handsome face was convulsed with the intensity of reaction. Thus, in half fit, half trance, he lay. Rupert threw himself on his knees beside his brother, tore open his collar, and threw water on his face. A flask of brandy lay on the table, he poured a little down his throat ; still he did not move. He dared not call Mildred, the wedded wife, to him in such condition. He knew not what effect the shock might have when first Malcolm regained consciousness. More water on his brow, more brandy to his lips ; at last his eye-lids open ; the wild, blue eyes seem to search for a face lost in a dream : The wan, white lips murmur the fatal name, "Olympia."

But just in time, Rupert made a warning sign and placed his finger on his brother's lips. Mildred and Louise stood on the threshold, white as the ball-dresses they wore, terrified by the corpse-like pallor of Sir Malcolm's face. In another moment they were at his side. The cold hauteur, the

chilling formalism of Mildred's nature, thawed to womanly sorrow and wifely love for the man who had been the lover of her earlier youth, whatever the coldness of later years. Still speechless, his head pillow'd on the breast of her whom, but a few moments ago, he had determined to abandon, his hands chafed by his fair sister-in-law kneeling at his feet, he remained insensible till Rupert returned with an English doctor, who happened to be in the hotel and who was the personal friend of all.

The doctor shook his head. "Has he ever had this sort of attack before?" he inquired; "is he a passionate man? Was there any special cause for the condition in which I find him?"

"He is very excitable," answered Lady Morton, "at times uncontrollably so; but it is the excitability of temperament, not of temper. As to the present time, I was not here when my husband was taken ill."

"He was with me alone," interposed Rupert. "He had been overtired, and event-

ually upset at the Veglioni, and he had worked himself into an agony of mind about various matters which will appear in a different light to him when he is better. Surely there is no danger, Doctor?" he added, as he noted the doctor's extreme gravity of demeanour.

"There is none at the present moment," replied the doctor; "but a recurrence of such a fit as this might be very serious. I do not wish to alarm you unnecessarily, ladies, but I warn you that every sort of excitement must be given up—mental or physical. It is too cold as yet for Frascati or Albano. Could you not get a change to Naples, to Castellamare, or thereabouts, even for a few weeks? This, however, is not so necessary as that the cause of this total upset, for cause there must be, should be entirely kept away from him; whether that cause be mental or corporeal, you know better than I—at present this trance is but reaction. See, he has already come round," he added, as Malcolm, with a deep-drawn

sigh, awoke once more to consciousness. "A warm bath and a quiet sleep will restore him more than anything. The servants are already about; I will go in search of the Secretary. He is worth fifty ordinary men when you want a thing done well and quickly."

In the bath Malcolm soon recovered, so speedily that Lady Morton came to the conclusion that the doctor was a bit of an impostor, and was making the most of an ordinary fainting fit, that he might pay his hotel expenses out of Malcolm's pocket instead of his own. Besides, the demon of jealousy had again taken possession of her. She felt certain that Olympia was at the bottom of all this: but how to separate her husband from such an influence? that was the question. Would he, rejoicing in his magnificent strength and abundant vitality, loving Rome with a love that amounted to a passion in itself, be likely to consent to leave it because he had had a mere fit? Her pride would not let her question

Malcolm as to Olympia. She did not love her husband as she once had loved him. Her affections had been drafted off gradually to her children—in them all her hopes were centred. She knew that he, her early love, had long ceased to regard her with any spark of the passion of years ago; many women would have resented his carelessness angrily and passionately: others would have broken their tender hearts; but she was made of a different stuff to such as these. Had she been witty or sarcastic, she would have tried barbed satire and withering contempt. Had she cared for coquetry, there were hundreds of her acquaintance among the other sex, who would have given worlds for a smile of love from the smooth, white voluptuous Juno, whose charms failed to bind the erratic heart of her wedded lord. But coquetry and satire were not in Mildred's line any more than deep passions or broken-heartedness. She was cold, proud and impassive; with a strong sense of duty; obstinate, uncompro-

mising, and jealous to an inordinate degree: in short, about as uncongenial a mate as the universe could furnish for such a man as Malcolm. Still there was no getting out of the fact that they were man and wife, and as such must consent to live together and appear of one mind, at least in public, whatever might be the tempests of dispute in private.

Lady Morton, therefore, treated her husband's indisposition, after the first fright had subsided, with a mere shoulder-shrug. Sunday mornings saw her as usual in her seat in the English church outside the Porta del Popolo, with one of her lovely girls on either side of her; she herself faultlessly dressed, tirée à quatre épingles, stately, haughty, with a bland distinguished air of repose.

Rupert, on the contrary, was more distressed about his brother than words can express. From earliest boyhood, he had worshipped his elder brother with a love stronger than all else in the world. To a

great extent it was returned, but the strongest feelings of the two natures were not the same. In Malcolm the animal predominated, in Rupert the mental, and, we might almost say, spiritual. Malcolm was an incarnation of selfishness where his passions were concerned, only held in check by the memory of early training and a sort of physical dread of giving pain to others. Rupert had known sorrow, had fought with debt and poverty and disappointment, and had been purified accordingly. To the same splendid physique and strong passions as his brother, he added the glorious crown of self-control. He fully grasped, not only the dangerous nature of the attacks to which Malcolm had become subject; but the strength of the excitement which had led to such results, and might at any time lead to the same again. It did not in the least reassure him that Malcolm should appear at noon, next day, radiant as the young Sun-god, in apparent health, strength, and spirits; the bright, blue eyes as keen as ever, all trace of ¹ness, even of fatigue, vanished.

A drive on the Pincio had been arranged by Lady Morton and the Marchese, and at four o'clock the carriages of the Italian nobleman and the English baronet were ready at the door of the Hotel d' Angleterre. It was Sunday; the Tramontana wind had ceased and the Sirocco was wafting its balmy breezes over Rome and the Campagna. The change of weather brought all Rome into the streets. From the Babuino—from the Corso—from the Ripetta, a swarm of carriages converged to the Piazza del Popolo and swarmed up the Pincian Hill; while from the opposite direction the multitude surged onwards and upwards from the Piazza di Spagna, the Via Felice and Via Sistina. The soft air, the gay throng, the exquisite blue of the mountains, whose tops were capped with snow, the strains of the band, the utter *abandon* of the joyous, careless populace, each and all combined to dispel from the minds of our group of friends the gloom of last night's adventures. For the sake of the rest, Rupert and Fiorella had

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decided that his proposal and her refusal should make no difference in their daily life. It was hard for the poor little girl: but she was strong to suffer, and cared not much for her own pain, if she felt she were right, and that others felt some joy. She, however, kept a jealous watch over her sister; while Rupert and Mildred from different motives were doing their best to efface from Malcolm's mind the cause of last night's frenzied outburst; not that, as far as could be judged from his manner, Malcolm seemed anxious to throw himself again into the vortex of such a whirlpool; on the contrary, he devoted himself entirely to Fiorella and the aged Marchese. To each and all of the party it was torture to be together; yet no one felt equal to decreeing that henceforth the two families should be strangers. The youth of Rome swarmed round the well-known carriages as they took their places opposite the band, and if the two girls were "distractees" and preoccupied, the married women seemed to be in high spirits; never had the

crimson glow of excitement dyed the Marchesa's cheeks with ruddier tinge, or lent a more sparkling lustre to her eyes: never had Lady Morton's sleek velvet skin looked smoother or whiter with its peach-like bloom; never had her manner been more bewitching, seductive, regal, than on this occasion. The Marchesa was to give a grand dinner in her apartment in the Corso that Sunday night, and she was busy bidding all her favourites to the feast. The illuminations in the Piazza Navona were to be unusually grand that night, and after dinner all the party were to go on foot thither to view the scene. The crimson glow of the setting sun was lighting up the dome of St. Peters. From the heights of Monte Mario, to the gardens of the Pamphili Doria, a glorious mellow light streamed slantwise on the Imperial city, on the hundreds of carriages that gyrated on the Pincio, on the thousands of strong men and fair women who thronged the terraces of Rome's favourite pleasure ground; but on none more splendid in

vigour and beauty than Olympia Roselli and Malcolm Morton, as they stood for a few brief moments together looking out over the vast Campagna stretching away to the waves of the Mediterranean. Very pale and silent were they both ; she, resting her sylph-like figure on one rounded arm, leaned over the stone work of the balustrade. Below her, the dark aloes reared their prickly growth among the tortuous paths ; while he, strong, tall, erect, loomed out against the clear blue sky, gigantic in comparison with her ; all the great passion of his shameful love film-ing the lustre of his steel blue eyes. Then, as she looked up at him, a little sigh, a little smile, a dewy semblance of a half-shed tear, signed the irrevocable bond that knit two souls in ruin evermore.

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THE guests were arriving. Olympia, dressed in black, with diamonds glittering on every part of her dress, on her arms, at her throat, in her hair, welcomed each and all with a calmness utterly at variance with her usual

reckless gaiety ; a hot flush was on her cheek, a flush of excitement, of triumph. Her dark eyes glittered bright as the jewels on her brow. By her stood her sister, striving to look and feel at ease, with a sad, grave, expression, ah ! how often on that sweet face of late ! Contrasting strongly with the looks of the Italian women, and close beside them, was Mildred, Lady Morton stately, imperious—Juno-like in her magnificent presence—robed in white satin, her masses of fair soft hair entwined with ropes of pearls, pearls round her full white throat and on her shapely arms ; a royal dame, smooth, calm and passionless, while, by her side, stood Louise in simple dress of white ; sad, almost tearful, wearing out her tender heart for the love she had given where there seemed to be no return, but too gentle, too loving, to be able to take back the heart that had gone out from her keeping once for all.

The guests came trooping in, the brilliant Salons were full ; it was the festa-day of

Olympia's patron Saint. The friends of the Marchesa Roselli — the beautiful spoiled darling of one of Rome's richest nobles — all came to pay their homage. Her rooms had been thrown open early, so that all might visit the Piazza Navona, while the myriad lamps were still alight amid the marble fountains in the square. Many of the guests had arranged parties of their own, and went off in groups together. Mildred pleaded the requirements of her children as necessitating her return to the hotel at an early hour. "Louise could be chaperoned by the Marchesa; besides, of course, Malcolm would go, and the Marchese too. Though the Sirocco was blowing, the nights were very cold. Louise must wrap up, would the Marchesa lend her a shawl? And so good night."

The Marchese escorted Lady Morton half-way up the Via Condotti, and along the Bocca di Leone to her hotel, and returned to join the party now ready to start for the illuminations.

At the last moment, Olympia would not go. "She was not well, she would rather be alone. Louise should have her black cloak, lined with fur, it was precisely the same as Fiorella's, and Fiorella found it so warm and comfortable. She, Olympia, had seen the illuminations many a time, it would be no treat to her." And so, after many expostulations, she was left at home: while her husband and sister, with Louise and the Morton brothers, with a host of English, Americans and Italians, went forth to see the fun.

They soon reached the Piazza Navona, lamps of every colour glimmered countless throughout the square; chains of light dangled from fountain, and statue, and balcony. The crowd surged hither and thither, some in masks, some in fancy dress, always good humoured, laughing and gay. It soon became impossible for so large a party to keep together; Louise clung half frightened to Rupert, Fiorella was escorted by the Marchese, Malcolm was lost in the

crowd. Presently an Italian, apparently a friend of the Marchese, joined the group ; they stood all together in the shadow thrown by the church of Sant' Agnese, watching a group of Roman peasants dancing in the light of the many coloured lamps. The new comer seemed to have a communication for the old man's private ear, for Fiorella stept back to Rupert's side, after the first few words had been spoken, and both Rupert and Louise could not but notice her white face and trembling form, as she clung to the arm of the former.

Louise glanced from Fiorella to the strange Italian, and a low cry of terror broke from her ; it was he who had terrified her at the Veglioni. Both she and Fiorella drew their black fur-lined cloaks closer round their figures and faces. Louise seemed paralysed with fear, Fiorella whispered hoarsely in Rupert's ear "Home, let us get home, there is danger I never dreamed of upon us. I heard him whisper to the Marchese, 'the honour of your house and

race is doomed,' Oh ! Rupert what horror has fallen on us, home, let us get home."

"Heard *him*!" repeated Rupert, astounded. "Who is he ? Who is this Italian ? What has he done to frighten you thus?"

"For the love of Heaven, ask me no questions," gasped Fiorella, "I recognise him now; I did not before; I will tell you all when we reach home."

The Marchese was standing as one turned to stone, his naturally stern features set with a fierce rigidity horrible to witness. The Italian had left his side and had disappeared, but the old man stood as one in a dream. The two girls clung to Rupert, who made a step forward to ask the meaning of this extraordinary scene: as he moved, a piercing scream rang through the Piazza, startling all the pleasure-seekers far and near, and Fiorella, stabbed in the breast, sank at his feet, weltering in her blood. The assassin made no effort to escape; a hundred hands seized him as, with frenzied gesticulations, he held the dripping dagger heaven-

ward, exclaiming, "With this I have avenged one daughter, with this I will avenge the other."

All was uproar and confusion ; scarcely could the better class of men, assisted tardily enough by an inadequate police force, keep the populace back from tearing in pieces the perpetrator of so foul a deed.

Rupert, as he folded the almost dying girl in his arms, heard her murmur faintly and low, "Save him, save him, he knows not what he does ; he is my father, and he is insane." To the police, who now held the assassin, Rupert turned and spoke. A carriage was close at hand ; at length the unhappy daughter was placed in it ; and the father, handcuffed and raving, followed with the police.

Meanwhile, Malcolm, after he had parted company with the rest of the party, had returned to the Roselli's apartments in the Corso ; constrained by some overwhelming influence to seek at all times and seasons Olympia's baleful presence. She

betrayed no surprise at his return. Her manner betokened that she had expected him, but except for the restless glitter of her eyes, and her heaving bosom, she might have been thought to have borrowed some of Mildred's cold repose. The subdued light of darkened coloured lamps, threw a soft sensuous tone over the room and its occupants.

He, in all the glory of perfect manhood ; she, faultless in grace, and form, and feature, and glowing with all the intensity of vitality possessed in such large measure by those of southern blood ; her marvellous beauty, enhanced tenfold by excitement, by the gleam of her diamonds and her costly dress.

“Malcolm !”

“Olympia !”

What need for words ? All was understood. Wild with passion, he strained her to his breast and rained his kisses on her burning lips.

There was a rustle in the balcony : a shadow flitted across the blinds ; there was

a sound as of a body dropping to the flags below, and all was still.

That they had been seen, there was no room to doubt. There was now no choice for them. Marriage vows, fidelity, honour, pity, were but shadows in a hated past. Passion had upset their boat, now they must swim or sink. Olympia was the first to speak, "all must now be known," she said, her words coming thick and hoarse, "what is that to me? If I have you, Malcolm, I have all that I would in time or in eternity. Lose no time, let us go."

So it had come to this: should he stay to brave the scandal before all Rome, to be the scorn of wife, and children, and society, but still tied to all, while Olympia, she who had lost wealth, rank, honour, all through him, should sink without him—lower and lower still? No! no!! no!!! A thousand times no. He loved her desperately, madly. They would part no more. Hastily she collected her jewels, and filled her purse for all their present needs. She flung over

Malcolm an Italian cloak, then cloaked and veiled herself, then took his hand in hers, and they two passed out into the night.

As they turned the corner leading into the Condotti, a vast crowd came surging down the Corso, from the direction of the Piazza Venezia. They hurried on ; "it was but a Roman mob," they thought, "returning from the fête in the Piazza Navona ;" once they looked back at the entrance to the Bocca di Leone, she at the crowd, he at the window of the Hotel d' Angleterre, where the forsaken wife was tending his henceforth fatherless girls. Olympia but saw a carriage with two women, one lying in the other's arms ; and, behind, a tall, strong man, struggling with the police, and dragged along ; but she knew not that in that carriage lay the dying sister she so fondly loved, and that in that tall strong man she saw once more the father who had given her being ; the madman who had been the terror of her girlhood, the spy in the balcony who had precipitated her final flight. They passed

into the Piazza di Spagna. In another hour they were clear of Rome.

All was bustle and stir in the Marchese Roselli's apartment. The dying Fiorella was laid on a couch, the doctors in attendance gave no hope, the wound was mortal. In a few hours, perhaps less, the life of the beautiful Italian must be translated to other scenes for which the beauty of her soul on earth well fitted her. She signed to the Marchese to approach; "see that he who stabbed me is taken back to Nice, to the asylum from which he escaped. Oh ! my brother ! for my sake, for your wife's sake, save him, he is our father."

She paused, exhausted by her effort, a spasm passed over the stern, rugged features of the Marchese, at the mention of Olympia.

With an effort, Fiorella proceeded, "He lost his reason on his voyage home from Buenos Ayres. Only my grandmother, Olympia and I, knew that he was still living. He must have escaped from St. Pons, at Nice, where he was confined. Where is Olympia ? I would speak to her."

Again she relapsed into silence and unconsciousness, her head on the bosom of the weeping Louise, Rupert and the old Marchese on either side of the couch.

Once more she rallied, a smile of ineffable repose lit up her countenance the first shadows of the approaching change began to deepen on her face, "Send for my sister, quick," she said, "I must speak before it is too late."

Still no reply, only a settled sadness on the faces of all; but Fiorella rambled on. "One more duty to perform, and then I go to my real home." She raised herself slightly, and placed Louise's hand in Rupert's "I know the hearts of you both," she murmured; "I have known all you know yourselves; may nothing ever come between you; may you pass through life happy in each other's love, and meet me in the other world beyond the grave."

Again she paused. Life's tide was ebbing rapidly. "Grieve—not—for me," she said with difficulty. "Death—is—sweet—to

me." Then gently her womanly self-sacrificing soul passed away from its earthly tenement. The loving heart of Fiorella Spironi was at rest: happy at the last that by her death she had saved the woman that her Rupert loved.

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THE unhappy father was still unconscious of his mistake, caused by the similarity of the costumes worn by the two girls; still unconscious that the dagger he had intended for her whom he conceived to have supplanted Fiorella in Rupert's affections, had really given the death wound to his own child. The slight glimmer of restored reason accorded him in his few days' liberty was lastingly over-clouded and deranged by the excitement of the horrors in which he had played so prominent a part; and before his daughter's body reached its last resting-place, Guglielmo, Conte, Spironi, was numbered with the dead.

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MILDRED, Lady Morton, seemed turned to

stone. All else but this crowning insult, her hard, cold nature might have borne ; but that in Rome,—Rome, where all the world knew everything, and more than everything, of the internal economy of people's lives ;—that she, the immaculate British matron ;—the haughty, handsome aristocrat, should be deserted for another woman, was all too much to bear. No tears dimmed her great violet eyes or marred the velvet bloom upon her cheek. Heart, she had none to break ; but pride and ambition, place and name, were ruined for ever by her husband's deeds. If she loved him not before, she loathed him now ;—him by whose means her name was for all time to be a name for pity in the mouths of men. None dared comfort her. Beyond all balm that love could minister—beyond all harm that hate could compass—was the bitter, bitter fate of one more victim to the beauty and wickedness of Destroying Angels.

She must leave Rome, and that without delay. Oh ! that she had never entered that

city of gorgeous misery, of soul-stirring passions, of untrammelled vice.

Thickly veiled, bowed down with shame and bitterness, Lady Morton left the fatal scene of her husband's perfidy, and, accompanied by Rupert, Louise, and her children, set out by a night train for Turin, there to await advices from England as to what could next be done.

Not a word was heard of the fugitives, not a trace of them could be discovered. So completely had they evaded all observation that it was deemed probable they must have sailed in some out-going ship for the Western world.

The Marchese retired to Florence.

That it would be a feud to the death, whenever the old Marchese should discover the hiding place of his faithless wife and her paramour, no one doubted. In Rome the tragedy of Fiorella's death and Olympia's elopement was but a nine days' wonder. The Spironi and the Mortons were soon alike forgotten. Other loves and other

scandals, other tragedies and woes, engaged the thoughts of passion-fraught Imperial Rome.

To the unhappy Lady Morton, worse than widowed, soon repaired at Turin relatives of her own ; and it was the unanimous opinion of all, that neither she nor her children, nor Louise, could longer stay in Italy, the whole party therefore were on the eve of returning to England, when the old Marchese Roselli suddenly appeared in Lady Morton's apartments to the utter astonishment of all.

From place to place, while the world supposed the old man to be fuming over his wrongs at Florence, had the Marchese pursued the guilty pair, and now at last, weeks after their flight, he had run them down in the outskirts of Turin. Ay ! run them down and found them ; true, but how ? The old man looked as though he had received his death-blow—so aged, and worn, and feeble was he—as he tottered forward and stooped to kiss the hand of the forsaken wife, whose husband had blasted his life and trailed his honour in the dust.

He motioned to the others to withdraw. There was a calm solemnity about him that forbade all interference. The victims of Destroying Angels were left together alone.

“Madam,” the old man began, “I know not if worse could have befallen you than what is now past. I do know nothing worse could have befallen me. But the anguish of my own heart has made me the fitting messenger to you of tidings that you must have learnt ere many hours were over.”

“Oh! Heavens—you have not met—Oh! say! his blood is not on your head,” almost shrieked Mildred, startled out of her unnatural calm by the awful impressiveness of his manner.

“I thank heaven it is not, Lady Morton,” answered the Marchese; but it is useless to deceive you or keep you in suspense. Your husband is dead—called by God’s own command. He lies but yonder, just outside the walls. His end was peaceful, though sudden as a lightning flash. He had another fit like that he had the night before—before—”

But here the old man broke down. He could not bring his lips to frame the words which formulised his shame.

“I understand,” said Mildred quietly; for now she knew the worst, reason resumed her throne, and all her calm self-possession returned to her. “Take me to him, he was my husband after all.”

Then even as she stayed her feet upon the threshold, he saw a look of horror, of enquiry in her deep, blue eyes. He divined her meaning.

“Fear nothing,” said he, “you will see but him alone. From the one has been taken life—from the other reason. From the moment his life was extinct, my unhappy Olympia has known no sorrow. Her mind has been a blank. She is already cared for in the asylum at St. Pons at Nice. Let us go.”

Then these two sad ones, despoiled of all that makes life worth having by those who had shared their homes, but not their hearts, passed out together to where the body of Sir Malcolm Morton lay.

Calm, and white, and beautiful he looked, all the fierce passions of his ardent nature stayed in death. But a few hours before, that massive frame, those stalwart limbs had glowed with the glory of a splendid manhood. The auburn curls clustered on the marble brow. The long brown lashes rested on the cheeks. The strong white hands lay clasped upon his breast. The miserable past forgotten for a space, Mildred's womanhood surpassed her wrath. The old, old love of long ago came back, and throwing herself upon the senseless clay, the frozen fountains of her heart broke up. Pressing her lips to his, she abandoned herself to an agony of grief. "Better thus, better thus," murmured the old Marchese, as he left the unhappy stricken woman alone with the still loved dead. A feeling of great compassion stirred his heart for the fair victim of that tragedy, the last scene of which was played out.

Sir Malcolm's body was brought back to England. As far as was possible the whole

story was hushed up. The widow accompanied the corpse, giving some plausibility to the rumour which was now gaining ground that she was with him at his death.

Lady Morton was reduced to comparative poverty by Sir Malcolm's untimely end; for the whole property, being entailed, passed to Rupert with the Baronetcy. Not six months of her widowhood had passed, however, ere the Marchese Roselli breathed his last; leaving to trustees for his mad, faithless wife, only enough to ensure her security at St. Pons, and to Lady Morton and her little daughters, enough to provide them with all the luxuries of the position to which they had been born.

Even the obstacle of poverty was now removed to the marriage of Rupert and Louise.—The former was at first overwhelmed by his brother's fate, and the shadow of his great grief was ever after on his mind; but Time, the great healer, and change of scene and the duties of his new position, and his great, great love for the

lovely maiden who had been a fellow-witness with him, and a fellow-sufferer in that unhappy past, gradually brought back his joyous laugh, and coaxed the sunshine to his hazle eyes.

Rather more than a year passed by before Sir Rupert took Louise to wife. It was the month of April, 1875. Spring was waking along the Riviera. For their bridal tour they had wandered along the Cornice. On their arrival at Nice, they found the whole city in a panic. The asylum at St. Pons had been destroyed by fire, and many of the insane had escaped in the confusion into the surrounding neighbourhood; amongst others, Olympia, Marchesa Roselli, to whom the world of reason had returned, when but a few months before the conflagration, she had become the mother of a blue-eyed boy. Till strength of mind and body had alike returned, she had tarried within the walls. There was no need for flight. She was discovered, only to be provided for. Far from the busy hum of men, she lives in

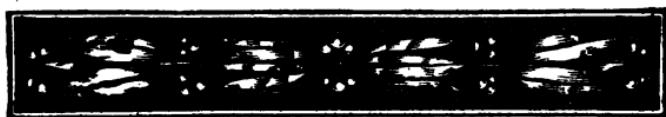
quiet seclusion. The memory of the past must ever be her portion. The girdle of remorse must ever encircle her, the crown of unavailing sorrow ever press upon her brow; but in the child she presses to her breast, she sees the image of that Destroying Angel, for whom, and with whom, she passed out into the paths of sin; and in that image of her idol, she still has no little joy.



A MODERN JAEL,

BY

THEODORE MONRO.



A MODERN JAEL.

IN a poor and thinly populated district in the West of Ireland, there towers in castellated might, above the waters of a mountain tarn, the grim looking castle of Rabyn. With deep foundations hewn from out the granite rocks, with massive walls, rising sheer up to an immense height from the water's edge, with lofty battlements rearing their heads to heaven, Rabyn Castle presents a spectacle of vast grandeur and absolutely impregnable strength. In times gone by, it had doubtless been the mountain stronghold of some Irish chieftain. But for several generations, the Castle, and the broad acres for miles around, had passed into the hands of an English Peer, Lord Rabyn.

The causes that led to the Fenian out-

break, had long been smouldering in all that neighbourhood. Poverty, the necessary result of Irish improvidence; gross ignorance, encouraged and fostered by a corrupt and unscrupulous priesthood; revolutionary spirit, rooted deep down, it would appear, in the very instinct of every Celtic race, had combined to arouse a bitter hatred among the native Irish, to the wealthy English Peer. Lord Rabyn had been a Colonel in the Guards, a mighty Nimrod, and a gay gallant. Originally possessed of a fine fortune, he had squandered thousands on his pleasures, and in his attempts to make himself a name, beyond that conferred by birth. As he advanced in years, his anxiety to retrieve his losses, and retain his pomp and power in his own country, made him a hard, and somewhat exacting, landlord to his Irish tenantry; while they, on their side, held him as no better than a thief and a robber; they regarded him as a foreign tyrant, with no right but that of conquest, in times long gone by; as a trampler on their national liber-

ties, and an enemy to their Church. Goaded by the sense of real and imaginary wrongs, their minds inflamed by their priests, they proceeded from dissatisfaction to open-air meetings, and then to arson and outrage.

Now, among the agricultural population of that district at this time, was a woman called Malone, who was regarded as a sort of oracle among the people, and who possessed immense influence in their debates. Apparently with a view to increasing her oracular reputation, she had taken up her abode beneath a gnarled old oak, the growth of centuries, which stood near the Catholic Chapel on the slope of one of the principal hills.

Though the wife of a stone-mason, she was scarcely a help-mate in his trade, having a soul apparently above business, and being much given to the discussion of political and religious difficulties among the wide-spread community, whom she chose to consider as as being under her especial charge and guidance.

There were some positions in life, however, in which she had the good sense to see that a man must take the lead. She became weary of listening to the endless tales of woe brought to her daily by the Irish peasantry. Evictions multiplied. In her early days the roads and commons were the property of all alike ; and the sons of the soil could camp where they pleased. But now a right of way was often contested by Lord Rabyn ; and the commons were frequently enclosed. Matters had come to such a pass that evidently vigorous measures must be taken forthwith : so she sent off, without more ado, to one Patrick O'Donnell, a kinsman of hers, who, though of a diffident disposition, and without much self-reliance, yet from his knowledge of the country, and his popularity with his fellows, appeared to be a desirable leader in the disturbance she was meditating.

Lord Rabyn seldom visited his Irish lands. They were, he considered, his own hereditary property, useful merely for the rent-roll they brought in. He cared little or nothing

as to whether the tenantry were happy or unhappy, so long as the latter forwarded him the money he considered the estates ought to yield. He was utterly indifferent as to the method of collecting his rents adopted by his agents. Intelligence that now reached him through those agents, however, had succeeded in convincing him that disaffection, nay, worse, was in the wind, and that unless the revolutionary spirit, abroad among his Irish labourers, were promptly quenched, he might whistle for his rents in future years.

Chieffest among his lordship's favourites, the darling of his regiment, and of society, was Captain Lionel Vivian, of the Life Guards Blue. No dainty fribble was stalwart Vivian; no curled and perfumed Piccadilly swell, with lace cravats and *articles de luxe* strewn upon tables of buhl, in rose-curtained boudoirs; nor on the other hand, was he of the big bully type, a swaggering ruffian, with a heavy jowl and cruel eyes. No! Vivian did not answer to the type of the traditional

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guardsman of romance. During his father's life-time he had been in a Hussar regiment, which had distinguished itself greatly in the Indian Mutiny, and in it his dauntless, bravery and heroism had won him the admiration and regard of all his brother officers. On his father's death, he had returned from India, and exchanged into the Blues. An only son, with a noble property, the idol of an adoring mother, an accomplished artist, and universally acknowledged to be one of the handsomest men of his day, Vivian, now in the prime of manhood, was possessed of every attribute that Gods could give, or women love, or comrades seek to emulate. In person, he was tall and symmetrically built, broad of shoulder, deep of chest. Though his head was easily and gracefully set on his shoulders ; perhaps, if fault there was in his superb "physique," the massive column of his throat lost too much in grace, where it gained in power, to be quite in just proportion ; but the genial merriment of his dark, blue eyes, took men

and women alike by storm. In court, and camp and grove—in the salons of Belgravia, —at the bay window in Pall Mall— who so gay, so full of life, so strong, so popular as Vivian. And Vivian took the gifts that fortune lavished on him, and laughed and quaffed, and loved and lived, as favourites of fortune only can. While flattered and sought after by every manœuvering Dowager in London, as just the man each wished for as a son-in-law; there was a mighty love far down in the yearning depths of Vivian's heart, that kept him pure from vulgar sins, and insensible to the charms of women of his own world. Had he not known Lord Rabyn's only child from her days of infancy? Had he not watched her bud into womanhood, and woed her almost still a child, before the terrible scenes in India? But proud, and apparently cold, was Margaret, Lord Rabyn's daughter. Proud of her wealth, her castles and estates, as sole heiress of her sire; prouder still, of her pale, delicate, haughty

beauty, that enchanted men's hearts, and laid a choice of ducal coronets at her dainty little feet. Proudest of all of her lofty lineage, and her descent from the Tudor Princes, she allowed the attentions of Vivian, as she did those of any other man, whom she considered in her "set." She flirted with him now and then, just to keep him on her list, and made him a useful foil in snaring bigger game. She confessed to an admiration too, for his superbly athletic figure, his chestnut curls, and pleading violet eyes: she loved his beauty well, but her own pride better, and communing with her own heart would say, "Who is this guardsman, after all, that women should worship at his feet? The son of a mere Yorkshire Squire, untitled, wild, comparatively poor. An Antinous forsooth, with a dash of a Hercules, say they? A heavy dragoon with a dash of a prizefighter, say I!" Yet the Lady Margaret could not bring herself to accept any other man. Woman-like, she fenced with all, and while

affecting to despise his suit, still kept young Vivian at her feet.

Most men treated thus would have rebelled; especially when there were women as high-born and beautiful and rich who would have been nothing loath to call the bright young demigod their own. But beyond that Lionel had a constant heart; he knew that his dear old mother in Mayfair, now so crippled by her weight of years as to be unable to walk further than across the room, had set her heart upon his winning Margaret. For Lord Rabyn was her oldest friend, her counsellor in stormy, troublous days, her would-be lover, even in the old, old times, before her love for Vivian's father had blossomed into flower. To her Lionel was all in all. How well she knew the times of his coming, his swinging, manly tread, or even the very wheels of his brougham at her door! How, if he were a little late, the tottering form would creep, by aid of crutch, across the floor, while the loving eyes from the window would watch with impatient glance for the bonny, bright

face of her handsome son; and Vivian's love for his mother was superlative, infinite, as humanity goes,—thoughtful, tender and devoted. If to his father he owed the broad acres, that made life to him one happy holiday, to her he owed his health, his strength, his marvellous good looks, his tone of mind, his social success, his love for all that was pure and noble, his lofty aims, his chivalry.

The season was drawing to a close, and Rabyn House, like its neighbours in Park Lane, was being prepared for its long repose, till yet another spring came round. Lord Rabyn was kept longer than his wont in town by an attack of gout, brought on, he declared, entirely by the perpetual worry of his Irish tenantry; so, when Vivian called one sultry day, in the beginning of August, to say farewell, he found his Colonel very far from happy, either in body or in mind.

“The long and the short of it is, my dear fellow,” said his Lordship, “either I must go myself to Rabyn Castle, or someone

with brains and pluck, who will make these devils knock under, must go instead. Here I am, with a touch of gout, that will prevent my getting about for ten days at least, and there is not a man I can think of who would, and could, take the trouble off my hands."

"You may always command *me*," said Vivian laughing, "if you think my brains are sufficient for the emergency. I think you know me well enough, to be sure I shall not show the white feather."

"You, Vivian, you!" replied the old man, in pleasure and astonishment, "Why! I thought you were due in Perthshire for grouse shooting on the twelfth?"

"So I am," returned the other, "but grouse can wait to be shot, and apparently Irishmen cannot. Seriously speaking, if it will be of any service to you, I will go to Ireland at once, and wait at Rabyn, doing what I can to stem the tide, and set things straight, till you are well enough to follow."

"You are a good fellow indeed," observed

Lord Rabyn, “ to give up the pleasure of the twelfth for me. Things do indeed look black; indeed, my land agent has already fled from Rabyn, and declines to attempt any further evictions. He says he goes in fear of his life. Not a farthing of rent have I had from that mob of howling demons all this year. If things go on longer, thus, ruin will stare me in the face. How long before you can start, Vivian ? ”

“ By the mail for Dublin to-night, my lord; my traps are few, and quickly packed. I shall take a few tough and trusty fellows with me, who can give a blow as well as take one, and care as little for an Irish shillelagh as for a schoolmaster’s birch. I will see the Lord Lieutenant if possible to-morrow, and get him to send down troops, if occasion needs them; but I can hardly imagine matters have come to such a pass as yet:—I beg your pardon, Lady Margaret,” he continued, “as the tall and graceful figure of the old Earl’s daughter, stood in the doorway leading to the conservatory, I did not know that you were present.”

“I heard all, Captain Vivian,” she replied; “for I was reading among my flowers close by. You shall not run this risk for us. If we are the richer for our Irish rental, we, and we alone, must encounter the danger of collecting it.” Her colour rose, her beautiful dark eyes half-filled with tears, and she let her hand linger unheeded in Vivian’s, as she appealed to her father to endorse her words.

“Nay, my dear, you must fight it out with Lionel yourself in the conservatory,” returned the Earl; “for I hear my doctor’s knock, and he likes to see me alone. Good bye, Vivian, and God prosper you.

Vivian closed the glass doors of the conservatory behind him, and followed Lady Margaret along the tessellated floor to a fairy bower of choicest flowers, where she was often pleased to enshrine herself by day.

She motioned him to a seat at her side. She was silent awhile and deadly pale. Presently she jerked out, with a hesitation of speech and manner, much at variance with her usual calm self-possession, “you

have no right, Captain Vivian, no right, I say, to risk anything for us. What are we to you, or you to us, that you should venture for us into that murderous wilderness, which others fear to tread ?

“ Nay, Lady Margaret, there is but little risk,” said he. “ Right, I have none, I know too well, except the right that every one possesses to screen those that he—well—those that are his friends from loss and shame. If another, with a better right than I, wishes to take my place, I have but to give way ; —still, if any man, single-handed, can win your rebellious tenantry back to order, I am vain enough to believe that I am he.”

“ No man has a *better* right,” the girl retorted angrily ; “ I only said you had no right at all : ” and then, for once losing all self-control, the haughty beauty burst into tears.

“ Margaret, Lady Margaret, what does this mean ? ” asked Vivian, his deep voice trembling with repressed emotion. “ Was it but to try my constancy that you seemed

never to return my passion ? Play with me no more. Let me hear from your own sweet lips at once, that your heart is mine only."

Lady Margaret rose hastily, ashamed of her emotion ; but Vivian retained her hand, and gazed up earnestly into her tear-stained face. It was not in nature longer to refuse the pleadings of that voice. Gently, tenderly, rapturously, he pressed her to his heart, raining hot kisses on her lips and eyes.

" Well ! now that you have gained the right to go," she slyly said, as, blushing and tearful, she disengaged herself from his embrace, " I suppose you must go at once, but one word before you start—should there be really danger in the West, and any circumstances should make you leave the Castle walls, remember that at the Fabers' house not many miles from Rabyn, you will always find loyal friends. Old Faber has English blood, and so has Joan, his wife ; and they are old retainers, indebted to us, generation after generation, for bite and sup, and bed and board ; aye, and for even shelter too,

when times were hard with them. They are black Papists, it is true; and—like my ancestor, bluff King Hal—I abhor the very name of Rome. But it is not possible that they should turn against us, after having lived beneath our very roof, and eaten at our board.” Giving this advice, and a bunch of white rose buds and forget-me-nots as a parting token, she led the way indoors, and when he had really gone, and her face yet glowed with the fierce homage of his lips, she locked herself into her room, and cried herself, for love, to sleep.

A man, as much about town as Vivian, had little difficulty in beating up recruits for such an object as he had in hand. He paid a hurried visit to his doating mother, whom he assured of his return in a few days, with enough bog oak and Irish diamonds to put a church in mourning, and all the spoil he could lay hands on, in the shape of Limerick lace and embroidery. “Perhaps, too,” he added, laughingly, “I may bring an Irish wife as part of the loot from the land of

Erin." Thus, lightly mocking at peril, and gently allaying her fears, he tenderly bade her farewell.

With a picked band of six stalwart and determined fellows, men of courage and fibre, disciplined and devoted to himself, he set out by the night mail, and was in Dublin early the following morning. Troops were promised in the case of any serious disturbances, and before another dawn had broken Lionel Vivian and his little band had arrived at Rabyn Castle.

The Fabers inhabited a low-roofed, straggling sort of barn, which had once been a farm house of some pretensions, but which the combined evils of an absent landlord and a thriftless tenant, had brought to a condition of desolation and decay.

Generations back, the Fabers both claimed Irish ancestry, or at any rate, belonged to that restless tribe of wanderers, who were perpetually changing their abode from Ireland to Scotland, and then from Scotland back again. Educated in the strictest tenets of

the Roman faith, both husband and wife were ready to sacrifice everything, kinsfolk, friends, and selves, for the welfare of mother church. Faber himself belonged to the family of McDonald, the father-in-law of that O'Connor who was prophet, priest, and king among the Irish, at the time of the English invasion under Strongbow. Long residence in England had naturalized him there, and it was generally supposed, that he had taken up his abode in the wilds of Western Ireland, more from outward and visible pecuniary embarrassment, than from inward and spiritual choice. In early life, he had been intimate with Lord Rabyn's family, and since poverty and misfortune had overtaken him, he had been indebted for all that he possessed to the charity of the English Peer. In character, he was a man of no account, known chiefly, as Mrs. Faber's husband; a mild inoffensive sort of creature, whose highest aim in life, and strongest excitement, was the fattening and slaying of numberless Irish kine.

Far different was Joan, the wife of his bosom, a black-browed, raven-haired woman, of commanding presence, violent temper and dogged obstinacy. In person, she was, in some degree, attractive, with a snake-like sinuous elegance of movement, that went far to tone down the harsh angularity of her somewhat masculine figure. In mind, she was ignorant, hypocritical and unscrupulous in her dealings with her fellows, bigoted and prejudiced in her faith, gloomy and disappointed in her poverty-stricken and childless lot. From her cradle, she had been nurtured in an undying hate to the English rule. A wild Irish girl herself, brought up in the far South West, with nuns for advisers, priests for confessors, and the lowest class of Hibernian peasantry for companions, she loved the people with an almost frenzied passion, believing that in unscrupulously serving them, she served both her Church and her God.

That she was indebted to Lord Rabyn for the means of subsistence, seemed but to in-

crease her bitter animosity to him and his race. Out of the gleanings of the rich harvest, brought to his Lordship's granaries by Irish labour, he flung a wretched pittance forsooth to the ousted lords of the soil, to them, her people, her down-trodden, oppressed kinsfolk, who were slaves on the land of their fore-fathers in order that English pride might be gratified. After weary wanderings in other lands she had come back to throw in her lot with her over-taxed and prostrate cousin-hood, and by them, and with them, Joan Faber would stand or fall.

Keenly had she entered into all the grievances of his disaffected tenantry. A day never went by but that some communications passed between the people's oracle under the gnarled old oak, and the austere mistress of the dilapidated house upon the lonely heather-covered plain.

The news of Vivian's arrival at Rabyn Castle spread like wild-fire through the ranks of the people. They saw in his advent but another outrage to their independence. The

numbers of his body-guard were exaggerated by every tongue that told the tale. To bitter hate was added the terror of reprisals for the late disturbances: and terror brought its own twin brother—thirst for blood.

The whole tide of the population surged up to the Catholic Chapel, close to which, under the heavy branches of the venerable oak, Mother Malone, the diviner, was uttering oracular warnings and commands, with regard to the present emergency. Addressing her kinsman, Patrick O'Donnell, she solemnly invested him with the leadership of the people.

“Take with you the stout sons of the Murphys,” said she, “and the pick of the boys in the valley, and lie in wait for this English spawn, whom I will myself draw out from the Castle, to the banks of the Feravon, which flows, not a mile from Rabyn, through the narrow mountain pass. I warrant me, when Mistress Malone calls, both Vivian and all his men will come to parley by the river side. Then, Patrick O'Donnell,

is your chance : you have them in the toils ; and if you let one English dog escape, you are not worthy of an Irish patriot's cause ! ”

“ Nay, mother,” answered Patrick timidly, “ I have no mind to go, alone responsible. Your influence with the people has in it something supernatural, and makes them stout of heart ; but I am but a work-man like the rest, and though I know the passes well, and the lads will follow faithfully, yet they do say the Captain’s men are giants as to strength and armed ‘at every point. If you will go, mother, I will go ; if you will not go, neither will I.”

“ Certainly I will go,” replied Mother Malone, “ but for all that, my son, this expedition shall bring you no glory ; for I read but last night in the stars, which never lie, that the Captain should die by a woman’s hand, and that hand will not be mine.”

So Mistress Malone sent word to Captain Vivian, inviting him to meet her two days from that time, in order to discuss the people’s grievances, at the little bridge over

the mountain streams, which meanders down the hill-girt valley, at the base of Rabyn Castle. O'Donnell, meanwhile, collected all the stalwart youth of the district, who, when the day arrived, were told off to form an ambuscade in the close thickets of birch and hazel that fringed the river's banks.

The aspect of affairs was so threatening, that Vivian lost no time in telegraphing to Lord Rabyn for instructions, urging him to come over in person, as soon as he was able to put foot to the ground, and saying, that although he had not yet asked for the interference of government, he felt that such help would probably be required before many days had passed.

Hedges, wire fencing, palisades, were everywhere torn down and destroyed. On all sides were conflagrations. Ricks and barns, lighted by unseen hands, flared nightly to the sky. The Castle itself was well supplied with garrison arms and provisions: and it was not for a moment to be supposed, that the rioters would attempt to carry so strong

a position by force. There was no one at hand to whom Lionel could appeal for advice, and on the receipt of Mistress Malone's message, he decided on availing himself of the interview, in which he hoped at least to persuade the people to lay their grievances before Lord Rabyn himself, before proceeding to extremities.

Escorted by his six trusted followers, at the appointed time, Lionel sallied forth from the Castle to the bridge over the Feravon in the valley below. The sun was high in the heavens, and blazed fiercely down on the band of Irish labourers, who, headed by Mother Malone, awaited the English Captain beyond the bridge. Lionel had deemed it best to go unarmed, not dreaming of treachery, far less of deliberate massacre, planned by civilized men, inhabitants of British soil, in the nineteenth century of the Christian era. A more splendid set of men one could nowhere see, than Vivian and his miniature body-guard, young, stalwart, hardy fellows all, who from their several trainings, recked little

of loss of blood, or even life, if lost in the discharge of duty. Two had been soldiers, two were gamekeepers, one was well-known in circles acquainted with the ring, and the sixth was Lionel's body servant, Martin Blake, a grand-looking Yorkshireman, by whose magnificent proportions, even the prize fighter's athletic limbs were dwarfed.

There was not even the pretence of courteous parley; no sooner had Vivian and his companions crossed the bridge, than at a signal from Mother Malone, they were surrounded by troops of yelling boys, who shouted and gesticulated around them, like so many maniacs let loose. For some time the Englishmen bore their insults in silence, trusting that their leader might yet obtain a hearing, but presently when a tall young fellow, who appeared to have some position among them, stepped up to Lionel and deliberately spat in his face, forbearance could go no further with the young Yorkshire yeoman; dashing his fist straight into the fellow's face, he laid him stunned and bleeding at his master's

feet. But the dogs of war were loosed, and even before O'Donnell and the Murphy lads came up from the birch copse, where they were ensconced, it had become a matter of life and death to the devoted little band.

“Back to the castle,” shouted Lionel, “cut your way back.”

But even as the words passed his lips, a sheet of smoke and flame shot upwards from the parapets, and with a loud explosion, a mass of solid masonry was upheaved towards heaven, and came crashing down in scattered fragments on the rocks below. The wall had been blown up; the Castle of Rabyn was in flames, from end to end. Back to back, grim and true, fought on that little band, and many a crashing blow went heavily home on Irish skulls that day. But seven men, however brave, cannot bear up for long against such awful odds. Scores of bruised and battered faces, numbed and powerless limbs, gave testimony to the strength of English muscle, and the endurance of English pluck. But there is no lack of

either strength or pluck in the boys of Western Ireland, and before long five of Vivian's gallant little company were lying bleeding and disabled, more dead than alive, at the mercy of a howling mob. Martin Blake, seeing a weak place in the enemies ranks, had made a dash to get through his encircling foes, half dragging Vivian with him through the gap.

"The game is up, sir," said he, "if we can get away, we can send in the troops from Limerick in time to rescue the rest. By ourselves, we are useless. The others are already bound, our only chance is flight."

Covered with blood and dust, and bruised in every limb, the two sped onward along the road to Limerick, as fast as their already exhausted strength allowed. Once away, there were none to stay them, for the whole population were at Rabyn, ecstatic spectators of the blazing pile. They gained the open plain beyond the valley, but Lionel's failing strength could bear up no more; and, as he fell to the purple heather, he had but power

to urge his companion on, while there was yet time, to reach the garrison with all possible speed. Hidden in the gorse and heath, Vivian might long escape detection; and at length, yielding to his master's imperative commands, young Blake fled onwards the town.

The dilapidated farm in which the Fabers had taken up their quarters, was close to the spot where Lionel, bleeding and worn out, lay breathlessly listening for any sound which might give evidence that he was pursued.

The flare of the blazing castle illuminated all the country around, and had brought Joan to the door of the homestead, to glut her vision with the destruction of Lord Rabyn's property. She saw the two men speeding over the plain, she marked the spot where Blake had left the other, and that other had disappeared.

She advanced across the heath, and soon came upon Vivian, hidden under the twisted branches of a bush of yellow gorse. She

immediately divined, from his appearance, who he was, and addressed him in sympathetic tones.

“You seem badly wounded, sir,” she said, “if you are one of the young Englishmen from Rabyn yonder, have no fear of me; I am Joan, Mr. Faber’s wife. My dwelling is close at hand; come in with me, and let me dress your wounds.”

“Faber’s wife?” muttered Lionel vacantly, “ah yes! I remember now, Lady Margaret told me you were as true as steel: My name is Vivian,—Captain Vivian. That howling pack of demons are on my track, I can go no further; think you, you can hide me anywhere, till the pursuit is past?”

“Assuredly,” she answered, as she helped him to rise. “Though my husband is away, they hold me too much in reverence here to dare to search my house, even should the rioters chance to come this way,”

New hope; new chances of escape dawned on Lionel. Here, then, was the very woman Margaret had told him of, ready and willing

to rescue, succour and defend. In a few moments he rested beneath the humble porch, a haven of refuge, truly, to a hunted soldier in a barbarous land. Faint and exhausted, he craved a draught of water. She brought him milk and food, served by her own hands. He was weary, he must sleep. She led him to an inner room, and laid him tenderly on a couch, then threw warm coverings over him, and wished him a long repose.

Meanwhile Martin Blake had reached the Limerick barracks, and had told his tale. A detachment of troops was immediately sent straight to Rabyn Castle, while another, guided by the stalwart Yorkshireman, hurried along the plain to the rescue of Captain Vivian.

As they passed out of the town, an open carriage and pair, containing an elderly, grey-haired man and a young girl of surpassing beauty, rolled passed them on the road. In the old man, as he leaned forward to ask the cause of this disturbance, Blake instantly recognised the Earl. In a few

hurried words, he apprised him of the destruction of the Castle, and the danger of his favourite, and urged his immediate return to Limerick.

But Lady Margaret laid her hand upon her father's arm ; "not back, nor yet to the Castle, father, but to Lionel. My God ! We sent him here, and if he dies his blood is on our heads ! "

The carriage could not move across the gorse and heather, and the Earl and his daughter descended—he still feeble from recent suffering—she erect, but deadly pale, as she marched, as bravely as the best of them, by the side of the English troops.

When Vivian's telegram reached Park Lane, Lord Rabyn had recovered, and, moved by his daughter's fears for Lionel's safety, he started at once for Dublin. He had come straight on to Limerick without stopping on the road. Thus he had arrived at the very hour in which the mine had burst beneath the castle wall, and had wrapped his heritage in flames.

Guided by Blake, the troops soon reached that part of the plain, where Lionel had been left concealed, but he was not there. The desolate homestead on the moor attracted the attention of the Earl, as being the Fabers' farm, and he immediately concluded, that this was his favourite's hiding place.

They demanded admittance, but the door was locked; they shouted, but all was silent as the grave; the door was broken down, but the house contained no living inmates.

An instinct guided Lady Margaret to the inner room; a moment her fingers rested on the latch; then, with ashen face, she opened it and went in. With starting eyeballs and open lips, she gazed at some object there, but no sound of utterance came from her lips.

The Earl and the yeoman had followed her, and caught her, as, with extended arms, she fell heavily forward on the corpse of Lionel. Yes! there he lay, the pale hues of death just settling down on to the still warm clay. The setting sun threw a golden ray

on to the bright chestnut curls, and tinted the long brown lashes that slept on his closed eyes. Not a spasm convulsed those noble features: Death must have done its work at once. From the temple of his fair young head, great drops of blood fell trickling down to the stained floor beneath, and, driven home through brow and brain, a huge nail showed how murder had been done. A workman's hammer lay on the ground below, with the gore of the victim still wet upon the iron. Lady Margaret did not faint: She could not, would not, believe her darling dead. With trembling fingers, she loosed the bloodstained shirt, and sought for the beating of his great, loving, constant, heart. But not a throb replied, only where her fair hand rested, she found a faded bunch of flowers, white rose buds and forget-me-nots, tied with a tress of her own dark hair. It was all that was left in this world below to Margaret, Lord Rabyn's daughter.

The mother's face still watched and waited at the windows in Mayfair. Oh! why did

he remain so long? When would she hear his manly step again? Her servants tried to comfort her, nay, she comforted herself. Was he not bringing home gifts for his bride, jewels, and lace, and presents of price, and perhaps after all an Irish bride, or even the Earl's proud daughter? Nevermore, poor aged mother, shall the joy of your life return. Nevermore shall your old heart brighten at the sound of his manly tread, nor your caressing fingers play with his chestnut curls. Done to death by a murderer, his young, bright, happy, life is crushed out by a ghastly deed. Lionel Vivian is dead, and Joan Faber, the incarnate fiend of bigotry, hatred and fanaticism, yet lives, for all that is known, far away at the ends of the earth. No trace of her was ever found, only O'Donnell and Mother Malone, still teach the people to reverence her memory, and immortalize in limitless laudation this type of infamy.

ALL
A GREEN WILLOW,
BY
THEO. MONRO.



ALL A GREEN WILLOW.

PERHAPS few minds are more free from traditional superstitions than mine, and any confession of belief in gipsy lore would have continued invariably to raise a smile pitying incredulity on my lips, had I not lately been an actor in as weird a fulfilment of human prophecy as I ever read of in the darkest records of a bygone age.

Fond of boating, and an enthusiastic artist, I had given myself an opportunity of satisfying both muscle and mind with the pleasures of aquatics and water-colours by occupying, during the summer months of 187-, a tiny cottage on the Surry side of the Thames, not far from Mortlake.

Among the many acquaintances to whom circumstances had introduced me, there were

two young fellows of about my own age, to whom my heart warmed with more than common friendship—men whose tastes, pursuits, and interests in life were identical with mine, but whose physical strength, rare personal attractions, and undoubted genius contributed to rise them in my eyes into heroes far above my humble mediocrity.

Like myself, both were untrammelled by the cares of marriage; both were worshippers at the shrine of art; both were lovers of the silver stream that gave our pencils ample scope for work, and our bodies healthful exercise. Like myself, they both trusted to their art for maintenance. Closer and closer, during many years of comparative poverty, of alternating hopes and fears, of success and disappointment, had the cords of affectionate sympathy bound us together. No jealousies had ever marred the perfect unity of our aspirations, or the harmony of our brotherhood.

Being a little man, light of weight, and
of habits, without that development of

muscle and sinew necessary to a successful oarsman, I was always relegated to the rudder during our daily river excursions, while my two stalwart companions increased their corded muscles as stroke and bow respectively.

One sunny April afternoon we had been for an unusually long pull, and, as we eased off the Ship Inn at Mortlake, a sensation arose to our lips and palates only to be allayed by a copious draught of "old-and-bitter."

So we paddled alongside, and, wearied and athirst, lounged into the pretty little bay-windowed parlour, and called for much malt liquor.

The tide was nearly at its height; the golden sunshine flooded all the scene; the green reeds whispered softly on the opposite bank; the pale leaves of the tender spring were budding fresh and joyous all around; the air was heavy with the odour of crass lilac bushes and the fragrance of sweetbrier; laburnum waved its golden garlands in the

balmy breeze. Everywhere was sunshine wooing Nature; everywhere was Nature throbbing to its kiss.

With the pipes of peace between the lips of contentment, we lounged and chatted at the open bay-window, tranquilly inhaling the united charms of tobacco and fresh air.

Lionel Seton, the elder of my companions, wearied with his day's exertions, threw his colosssal frame on the sofa, and silently watched the wreaths of pale-blue smoke he puffed into the upper air. A reticent man was he, not given to many words; of an ardent affectionate nature, hasty of temper, brave and strong—a very model of a Saxon-Hercules. The frankness of his bold blue eyes, his curling locks, the forest of his golden beard, his straight, strong limbs and mighty shoulders made him the cynosure of every eye. There he lay, six feet of physical perfection; the corded muscles of his limbs standing out Milo-like from arm and chest and throat, the sunshine playing with his yellow hair.

No less striking in appearance, though built in quite another mould, was Cyril de Fonvielle, who, with his head resting on his hands, was dreamily staring into space across the stream. In person he was as tall as Lionel, but more slightly formed. Large hazel eyes looked dreamily out from under pencilled brows; a heavy auburn moustache shaded a somewhat sensual mouth. The close wavy hair and pale clear skin gave signs of more southern blood than ours, while the exceeding delicacy of his strong white hands and shapely feet spoke to high breeding under any clime. In character the contrast between the two men was no less marked. A repose, amounting almost to sadness, was the prevalent expression on Cyril's face. His manner was undemonstrative almost to coldness, though in sickness or sorrow more tender care than his, more winning sympathy, never soothed a pain-fraught body, nor comforted a weary heart. He lived in Mortlake with a widowed mother, a woman of a noble character, in

whose pale face past beauty and present suffering showed their trace. For she was an almost helpless cripple from a fall in earlier days ; and an ever-pressing poverty had wrought no mitigation of her lot. She had a daughter too, younger than Cyril, extremely like her brother, both in person and character. Brother and sister possessed in common a dreamy poetic temperament, a keen appreciation of the beautiful, and an extraordinary power of sympathy, when circumstances called it forth. The same low broad brow and dark wavy hair, the same hazel eyes and full curved lips, characterized Adela as Cyril. There was a nameless refinement about them both, a patrician bearing, a high-bred grace, that seemed to belong to them above all others.

Presently Cyril, still gazing dreamily at the willows across the stream, with that expression in his great dark eyes that seemed to be ever looking onward and outward to some blissful possible not yet garnered to the granaries of fact, broke silence.

"Dreary, very dreary, is that opposite bank," he said. "The willows murmur ceaselessly a hushed and mournful wail; the reeds breathe low, as if in some mysterious fear; they nod and beckon from their solitude, and wave a silent longing for companionship. Dreary, very dreary, is that opposite bank."

"It has a weird aspect," I replied; "and forms a strong contrast to this side. But why cherish dismal scenes straight over yonder, when the glorious reaches right and left shimmer so brightly in the spring sunshine?"

He laughed, a little laugh more like a sigh, as he answered, "I suppose I am somewhat of a fatalist. It is because that dismal scene is straight before, neither to right nor left, that my mind dwells on it. Those waving willows have a strange charm for me; they seem so near to all the gladness of the Surrey side, and yet so exiled from its influence. Fancies will steal over one sometimes," he added. "To me the willows opposite speak

always of the grave, so silent are they in their solitude; while here with us are life and hurry and noise——”

“Enough to drive one wild,” I interrupted, as my view was suddenly intercepted by the apparition of a tall, wild-looking gipsy woman immediately in front of the bay-window. Her black eyes gleamed through tangled masses of unbound and disordered hair, while above her head she shook castanets, not without skill, to some unintelligible refrain.

As we stood, I noticed that her figure threw a shade over Cyril’s face, while the sunlight, gleaming from her castanets, danced merrily over Lionel’s, and flashed on his golden beard. The noise of the music and the sheen of the bells roused the recumbent giant from his reverie, and brought him to the window to know the cause of his disturbance. Gaily he laughed as he crossed the gipsy’s palm with money, and opened his great strong hand to have his fortune told. Gravely she traced the lines, search-

ingly she gazed into his blue eyes, then traced the lines again. Suddenly, with a gleam of satisfaction, which made even her old withered face look bright, she flung the castanets above her aged head and sang the following refrain :

“ Sunny smiles from woman’s eyes
 Await thee under tropic skies ;
 Grassy lands and yellow corn,
 Stalwart sons and daughters born ;
 Snowy fleeces, golden pieces ;
 Wifely love that never ceases,
 Springing from thy marriage morn.

Little as Lionel believed in divination, the evident faith in her prophecy, that inspired the old gipsy’s tone, made some impression on his joyous soul. Pushing Cyril forward, he anxiously watched for the same good fortune for his friend ; but the gipsy’s hand trembled as she gazed into Cyril’s face, and the great tears gathered in her coal-black eyes. She gently smoothed his strong white hand, and bent her head in silence.

“ Nay, nay, good mother,” said De Fonvielle ; “ if love and gold are not for

me, tell me, at least, what I must avoid."

Thus pressed, she gently laid aside his hand, and chanted in a wild weird tremolo :

" Fond caresses, nut-brown tresses,
Lure thee onward to thy doom ;
Green reeds weeping o'er maiden sleeping,
Wrap thee in funereal gloom.
Starry worlds above thy head,
Rushes for thy bridal bed,
Willows for thy tomb."

Half frightened by the woman's tone, I looked up hastily at Cyril : he met my eyes, and a slight shudder ran through his frame ; while the castanets fell from the old crone's hand and dropped in jangling discord on the ground. Anxious to divert attention, I offered my own hand for inspection, not without an inward misgiving, I must confess.

Presently, with resumed composure, and the same grave faith in her own foreknowledge as at first, she chanted :

" Wedding bells, but not thine own,
Greet thee at the hour of noon ;
Lowly paces, upturned faces,
Haunt thee by the midnight moon.
At morn thy voice shall greet the bride,
At night thy fingers shall divide
Dead lovers' dead caresses."

A feeling of awe stole over us all as the gipsy, catching up her castanets, disappeared as suddenly as she had come, and left us gazing blankly at each other.

“When you are a millionaire in the tropics,” said I to Lionel, by way of making a joke of the whole thing, “you can send us paupers at home an odd thousand or two occasionally; and as to you, Cyril, who may this maiden of the nut-brown tresses be, whom you have kept dark from both of us?”

“I have never been in love in my life,” said Cyril frankly, “and I have no more notion who the old woman means than you have. But it is getting late; my people expect both you fellows to dinner to-night. So let us be off.”

Cyril and I moved off in one direction—Lionel to his own lodgings in another quarter, to meet us in an hour at the house of the De Fonvielles. Our road lay along the towing-path, now silent and deserted. Deepening twilight was settling down upon

the river, when suddenly a woman's scream rang in our ears, followed by another and another. We dashed round the clump of willows from which the voice proceeded, and saw a fair young girl, with hair disordered and unbound, vainly struggling in the arms of a brutal bargeman, whose coarse lips sought to smother in caresses her terrified cries for help. For several moments I knew not what occurred. The bargeman, furious at being baulked, struck out on the instant, and sent me spinning down the bank, till I reached the water's level. When, covered with mud, besmeared with blood, and dripping with water, I again put in an undignified and lugubrious appearance on the top of the bank, I found Cyril holding the fainting girl in his arms, a great gash on his temple, from which the blood flowed copiously, and the bargeman was nowhere to be seen. It was evident he had been worsted in the fight, and had made off with all convenient speed. It was no time to ask questions. We laid the fainting woman on the grass,

and bathed her temples and chafed her hands till consciousness returned. She was a lady evidently, very young and beautiful, and with masses of nut-brown hair. How come she here alone, in darkening twilight, unprotected? I shuddered as I thought of her abandoned to the tender mercies of the sturdy ruffian from Cyril had rescued her. Presently the little fluttering soul came back, and with a weary sigh she opened her great wondering eyes. Soon, as the past came back to her, she clung closer to Cyril; and the drops from his bleeding temple fell on her upturned brow. Directly she knew that he was wounded all care for herself seemed to vanish, and all her thought was for him. Tearing her handkerchief into strips, she dipped the pieces in the cool Thames water, and bound them round his forehead. I think we were not altogether sorry for the gathering darkness. Orthodox heroes are wont to floor their foes by one swift stunning blow, and, themselves scatheless, receive beauty's gratitude on bended knee. But

here was one of us with a wound of which he would bear the scar for life, and the other a soured and draggled specimen of limp humanity, not yet recovered from the mighty force of a bargeman's single blow.

The girl, as it turned out, was a little governess, living quite alone, she said. She had been giving a music-lesson at Kew, and, tempted by the beauty of the day, was wandering home along the river's bank, when she was insulted by the ruffian from whose embraces Cyril had delivered her. When we had escorted her to a little creeper-clad cottage where she lived, and had received permission to call again next day, we departed to our own homes, to efface the traces of our late encounter.

Arrived at his mother's house, Cyril was very silent as to the day's events; and I, having a vague dislike to the weirded utterances of the gipsy, and feeling wofully small in the part I had eventually played with the bargeman, was more than usually taciturn. Perhaps the old crone's chants influenced us

all. Certainly I had never before noticed, as I did this night, the tender earnest tones in Lionel's voice whenever he spoke to Adela, or the atmosphere of gentle devotion with which he enveloped her. Accustomed to Adela's society from her childhood, I knew her, and cared for her as my own sister; and from this very night, I began to detect in her shyness and reserve towards the golden-haired Hercules, the subtle influence of awakened love.

Cyril was silent and preoccupied. Pensive he had always been; but now a warmer, deeper light seemed to glow in his lustrous hazel eyes than heretofore. The very next day, found him at the cottage of Kate Vaughan, the rescued governess. Before a week had passed she and Adela were bosom friends; and at the end of a month it seemed as if we had all known her from her babyhood. She was a pretty, wayward blue-eyed child, not yet out of her teens—an orphan, poor, but well-born; a spirited girl withal, sparkling and gay—her voice

and face and air all full of merriment. But perhaps the chiefest charm of all was her wealth of nut-brown hair.

Time flew on apace. Spring changed to summer; and other changes than that of seasons came to guide the current of our lives. Cyril, more fortunate than I or Lionel, had at length painted a picture judged worthy of acceptance by the Academy; and his fame was bruited abroad. A weird and fanciful subject he had chosen truly—a moonlight scene upon the silver Thames, rushes and weeping willows everywhere, and on the flat waste land on the farther side, a single female figure with bowed head. A full flood of yellow moonlight rested on her, making her thus stand out from the surrounding gloom. The sketch had a certain grandeur about it. It pleased in high places. It sold for a large sum; and Cyril was on the road to fortune.

Not many weeks after our meeting with the gipsy at the Ship Inn, Lionel Seton received a letter from an uncle in the Brazils,

announcing the death of his only son, and offering to adopt Lionel in his boy's place, provided that his nephew came out to settle in South America, and to cultivate the broad acres that were his property. To a man in Seton's position, without kindred, money, or influence at home, so brilliant a prospect admitted of no refusal ; and when he found that Adela, the idol of his heart, was willing to follow wherever he led, his cup of bliss was well-nigh brimming over. Their marriage was fixed to take place the first week in October ; and the newly-wedded pair were to proceed at once to their new home in the Western Hemisphere without further delay. I quite expected that Cyril and Kate would catch the reflected glow of the happiness that enveloped Adela and Lionel ; but though Cyril's passion evidently grew and strengthened day by day, till all his world was centred in his little Kate, some unseen influence seemed working in his heart, which kept him from avowing it to her. And she, sweet sunny soul, was only

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waiting for her love's first kiss, to be his only, his for evermore. Yet were the two always side by side—his tall, lithe figure contrasting with her child-like form, her sparkling eyes of bluest blue merrily challenging his mute gaze of love. For me, I was happy in the loves of all. Mrs. de Fonvielle had ever been as a mother to me since years before I had lost my own, and it fell to my share to guide her garden-chair and anticipate her wants, while the happy quartet were inhaling draughts of passionate bliss from the light of each other's eyes.

Thus summer glided into autumn. The day of the wedding was close at hand, and the pangs of the coming separation shared with our hopes a place in the hearts of all. So bright, so joyous was the prospect in the Brazils for Lionel and Adela, that the parting lost much of its sting to us younger ones; but to Mrs. de Fonvielle, who had never yet been parted from her youngest born, I knew the blow would be a heavy one.

At last the marriage morn arrived. A quieter wedding it could not have been, but a more splendid-looking couple never stood before altar-rail. Types of perfect man and maiden hood, stalwart Lionel and peerless Adela were married and were one.

Then, while we signed our names, I pressed a brotherly kiss upon her brow, and as my lips touched her it chimed the hour of noon. Then gaily and wildly rang out the bells, and the village children strewed the path with flowers. I walked by Mrs. de Fonvielle's bath-chair, while tears of joy ran down her cheeks; and Kate and Cyril wandered on in front.

As I guided the invalid's chair up the shrubbery-walk, I saw the two seated on a garden-bench—her hand in his, his face bent down to hers. I saw the meeting of their lips, the look of fathomless joy throned in their eyes, and I knew that all was well. Joy, indeed, was in the hearts of all at seeing Cyril's betrothed ring on Kate's small hand, at knowing that two dear ones, though left behind, would not be left alone.

The parting was over—Lionel and Adela were gone.

Their ship sailed from the London Docks that very evening. I did all I could to cheer Mrs. de Fonvielle. Cyril and Kate had started for a walk to Richmond, in which I had declined to join them, feeling that in their new relationship they must prefer to go alone. It was late when they started, so the dinner hour was postponed till eight o'clock, by which time they had no doubt of returning. The autumn twilight deepened into night; an October moon rose bright and clear, and crested the rippling Thames with silvery light; the village clock chimed eight, but Kate and Cyril had not yet returned. Concealing my anxiety as best I could, I invented for Mrs. de Fonvielle's benefit every reason possible, or impossible, for their delay. I knew the friends to whose house they had gone. Doubtless there had been much to tell of the wedding, and the start from England, and the new betrothal; but nine o'clock came, and still the pair did

not appear. My anxiety became too intense to admit of further inaction. In a few minutes a train would pass Mortlake for Richmond. I threw on my hat and coat and tore down to the station. I arrived just in time, and from the Richmond terminus rushed in hurry and alarm to the house at which their visit was to have been paid. I was informed by the lady of the house, that both Cyril and his fiancée had been there till as late as seven o'clock ; that Kate, wearied out by the fatigues of the day, had suggested that Cyril should row her home ; and that she, their hostess, had lent them her sons' boat for that purpose, on their promising to return it the following day.

A nameless terror froze my blood—a grim presentiment of some dread tragedy. Just then the lady's sons came in. I communicated my fears to them, and we determined to row over the same course as Cyril had taken with all possible speed ; so that if perchance some accident hath indeed occurred, we might either give immediate help or

at any rate know the worst. The two brothers were vigorous men and practised oars, accustomed to pull together ; so I took the lines in my trembling hands, and soon, aided by the ebb of the tide, we were well on our course to Mortlake. All was silent and still ; the oars flashed with even strokes in the light of the autumn moon. Still no boat in sight, no trace of the missing lovers. We neared Mortlake. Suddenly, on rounding a corner about half a mile from the Ship Inn, we nearly ran foul of a barge on which loomed, gigantic in the darkness, a solitary figure of a man ; as he changed his position to hail us the moonlight fell full upon his face, and I saw he was the same bargeman the strength of whose arm I had such cause to recollect.

“There’s been a accident,” he shouted, in a rough evil voice ; “a boat came round yonder point but a short time agone, and fell foul of this here barge ; and the gentleman and lady both are—”

“Where? For God’s sake, tell us quickly! Are we too late to help ?” I cried.

“Gone to the bottom ! I never heard a sound. The gentleman was struck by the barge just on the forehead, and dropped his oars, like one stunned, afore the boat turned over, and she, the lady, never spoke one word, but spread out both her hands and caught him as he reeled ; then they sank together, and the boat has gone down stream.”

“How long ago was this ?” said one of the young fellows with me.

“Nigh on an hour agone,” returned the bargeman hoarsely, with a cruel smile.

Oh, how the gipsy’s warning rang in my ears ! Horror-struck, almost beyond expression, I bade the oarsman once more hurry on ; mechanically, sick with dread of what I felt was yet to come, I steered for the weeping willows opposite the inn, and, leaping out, searched in the swaying reeds by the river-side.

Yes, there they lay, white, and stark, and dead, circled in each other’s arms ; his lips just pressing hers, her wealth of nut-brown

hair lying out upon the stream. A willow bough had caught them as they floated by, and lay pillowing the heads of both united in their death. Reverently I raised Cyril's handsome head from the face of his beautiful betrothed ; and even as I parted their lips the sounds of the midnight hour rang out on the silent night. Mingling with the toll of death, I thought I heard the jangling clang of broken castanets.



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